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ABSTRACT

The Radio-Television Journalism section of the Proceedings contains the following 7 papers: "Winner by a Sound Bite: Fairness and Balance in the 1998 Michigan Governor's Race" (Sue Carter, Frederick Fico, and Jocelyn A. McCabe); "The Effects of Competition on Television Coverage of City Hall" (Stephen Lacy, Charles St. Cyr, and David Coulson); "Television Network Affiliation Changes in a Major Market and the Effect on News Viewing" (Samuel J. Sauls and Marilyn L. Boemer); "The 1996 Presidential Nomination Contests: Network News Coverage" (Karon Speckman); "Prime Time News: Effects Associated with the Rise of the Television News Magazine Format" (Jennie Rupertus); "A Quarter Century of Television Network News: Fewer, Longer (?) and Softer News Items" (Daniel Riffe and Lori Spiczka Holm); and "Has the Salary Gap Closed? A Survey of Men and Women Managers at U.S. Television Stations" (Jennifer Greer and Keisha Williams). (RS)

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Radio-TV

WINNER BY A SOUND BITE: FAIRNESS AND BALANCE IN THE 1998 MICHIGAN GOVERNOR'S RACE

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Abstract

Much of what voters learn about candidates for state office comes to them from local television news programs. Just how frequent and, more importantly, how fair and balanced coverage of these candidates is presents a fertile area for research. In this study, "Winner by a Sound Bite: Fairness and Balance in the1998 Michigan Governor's Race," the researchers discovered that local television stations may claim fairness and balance in their overall coverage from Labor Day to the election, but that individual stories can be substantially out-of whack when it comes to structural and partisan balance.

INTRODUCTION

For as long as reporters have put ink to paper, politicians have decried the bias they perceive in news coverage, especially coverage directed at politicians. Journalists argue that, to the contrary, the notions of fairness and balance are central to late 20th century reporting and are widely exercised.

The words "fairness and balance" may be part of a fairly recent journalistic lexicography, but the core ideas have a long tap root. Indeed, the ideals of free speech and free press are inextricably intertwined in the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, agreed upon more than 200 years ago. Such freedom of expression — whether speech or press — is most valued because the freedom is critical to the healthy operation of democracy. Freedom of expression especially must be imbued with fairness and balance in reporting public policy because it is vital to the functioning of democratic institutions. Fairness and balance in reporting elections to decide among those with differing policy priorities is foundational to a democratic society's ability to make full, informed choices. Such fairness and balance is the focus of the research presented here.

Fairness and balance in reporting is important for the well-being of both society as a whole and for mass media institutions in particular. The fairness and balance with which issue positions are presented in the media influence the functioning of the political process through the media's ability to set the public policy agenda. Fairness and balance are central ethically to journalism's self-defined role as an impartial and objective observer. Finally, fairness and balance are also economically important to the mass media, which depend on a mass audience attracted in part by the credibility of their claims to report conflicts fairly and objectively.

The ethical assumption underpinning this research is that candidates and their supporters cannot hope to inform and persuade voters unless they obtain a forum for expressing their own views in their own words. Inquiry into fairness and balance in this context can explore the extent to which opponents obtain a manifestly equal forum for those expressions.

The broad purpose of the research is to further an understanding of local television news coverage of elections and to share with broadcasters findings that relate to the fairness and balance of their presentation. Given that television has become society's primary source of information, the manner in which news is relayed becomes an increasingly important factor in our political system. Just as news consumers rely on television for accurate information about the weather and the community, so, too, do they depend on television for accurate details about elections and political leaders. For this reason alone, research into the level of fairness and balance in reporting merits academic scrutiny. A check on reporting serves not only the profession, but the greater interests of society as well.

This study of the way in which four mid-Michigan television stations covered the 1998 gubernatorial race focuses primarily on two assessments of reporting: partisan balance and structural balance. News stories were evaluated not only in terms of whether they supported a particular candidate, but also the manner in which they were constructed. For example, did journalists seek out more than one source in relating their story? If they did, were the sources from the same sides or did they represent different viewpoints? And once the stories were edited (and sometimes packaged) where did they appear in the nightly local newscasts? This research relied upon such factors as story length, sound bite length, story position and story topic to address these and similar questions about fairness and balance in local political broadcast

coverage.

Specifically, the assessment of the partisan balance of coverage concerns whether stories in their aggregate gave more attention to assertions supporting a particular candidate. Partisan balance, therefore, relates to the potential influence of this news coverage on elections and the consequent public policy outcomes. The assessment of the structural balance of coverage concerns whether stories in their aggregate are constructed to be even-handed or one-sided in attention to such assertions, regardless of the direction of any partisan tilt. Structural balance therefore relates more narrowly to the ethical self-consciousness of journalists and more broadly to the credibility of their ethical claims with consumers.

IMPLICATIONS OF BROADCAST STORY BALANCE

These two assessments, partisan balance and structural balance, are clearly related but also differ in fundamental ways. Across the life of an election, the partisan balance of coverage may be quite even, although any particular story might be very one-sided. Journalists might credibly claim that coverage of the particular election was fair, while viewers of any particular one-sided story would assert the opposite. Assessing both partisan and structural balance of campaign stories permits a probabilistic approach to determining the likelihood that news consumers will perceive bias in the news, whatever its partisan direction. Specifically, this research assesses the fairness and balance of each election story broadcast, and aggregates those findings across the life of the election as a whole. Because few viewers encounter all broadcast election stories, this research estimates the chances of encountering a story that is structurally balanced or imbalanced. In other words, whatever the partisan balance of the total election coverage, what are the chances of

viewers encountering stories that are fair or unfair, balanced or imbalanced?

The broadcast medium is more restrictive for consumers than print, and the way stories are constructed more likely determines what viewers take from them. A broadcast story is linear, and therefore, gives viewers the opportunity for only a single exposure to a story that cannot easily be reexamined. That story might present only one side in an electoral contest or two (or more) sides. If the story is two-sided, the order in which the sides are presented, and the relative length of their assertions, will influence the likelihood that a viewer will be exposed to a particular candidate.

Certainly the results of a study such as this can be used in several different ways by broadcast journalists. Obviously, the methods for monitoring election coverage can be adopted so that broadcast stations are aware of their day-to-day and overall campaign coverage of candidates. Awareness of how candidates have been covered can provide feedback to both the journalists themselves and to members of the public as well as candidates. Further, such information can serve to guide election coverage, correcting for biases in attention that may develop in a campaign's coverage.

Giving emphasis to the need for awareness of typical story structural characteristics are studies linking fairness and balance with journalistic credibility with the public. Virtually every study of media credibility has considered fairness and balance as influencing public perception of the media.[1] As recently as November 1997, the Freedom Forum pledged $1 million for research and other projects on newspaper fairness because of its link to credibility in the public mind.[2]

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Bias, or the lack of fairness and balance in a news story, is popular fodder for most studies concerning broadcast news and election coverage.[3] However, little published research offers insight into the presence of these structural characteristics solely in television journalism; analysis of local TV news coverage of local elections is even rarer.

Much of the available mass communications research concerns network television coverage of national elections. Johnson, for example, used a content analysis of the *New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the three major television networks to probe coverage of the pre-primaries and the primaries of the 1988 presidential election.[4] Similar research was conducted in conjunction with the 1996 elections, in which coverage was drawn from CNN, ABC, and more than 40 national newspapers.[5] With the aid of a computer content analysis program, Domke et al. sought to determine whether — and how — potential biases in media coverage play out in various types of election coverage.[6] Their findings revealed noticeably balanced media coverage of the two presidential candidates, Bob Dole and Bill Clinton, in spite of comments from the candidates and the public indicating otherwise. The oft-perceived "liberal bias" of the news media, as suggested by journalists, politicians, and the public alike, was not supported in the study's analysis of national print and broadcast media. Similarly, Lowry's[7] study of TV sound bites during the 1992 presidential campaign found no evidence of liberal news bias in the network news sound bites of the candidates themselves. However, the liberal news bias was proven out in the sound bites of the non-candidates (political aides, party representatives, candidate family members, etc.).

Additionally, the amount of election coverage TV stations give over to local political news appears to be shrinking in some parts of the country.[8] In 1998, the Annenberg School for

Communication's analysis of the California governor's race revealed that less than one-third of one percent of local television news was devoted to that race.[9] Given that local politics plays such a vital role in the lives of the constituency, a decrease in local election news coverage does not bode well for the democratic process.

Past studies of election coverage have relied on subjective measures to complete their analyses, meaning that the researchers interjected their own perspectives into the studies. Specifically, previous research rests on researcher interpretations of election material. In a study of TV and newspaper coverage of the 1988 Democratic primaries, Johnson tracked the amount of coverage and its tone, based on the story's perceived theme.[10] In tracking the presidential primaries, Johnson found a cyclical relationship existed between media coverage and the campaign's performance.[11] Candidates who performed poorly suffered negative coverage, while those who did well enjoyed more positive coverage. Similarly, Hofstetter and Buss charted a story's theme to aid in determining bias in the coverage of political events by treating bias as a function of selectivity.[12] By removing bias from its prototypical definitions and examining it as a scientifically measurable variable free from value judgements, Hofstetter and Buss were able to analyze the news through an empirical analysis of the term.

Finally, a substantial proportion of studies do not rely solely on television content for their data. Frequently, researchers have used a combination of print (magazines, newspapers or both) and national broadcast material for their studies. Evarts and Stempel III scrutinized the three major T.V. networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), the three major news magazines (*Newsweek, Time* and *U.S. News & World Reports*) and six major newspapers in their analysis of the 1972 presidential campaign.[13] As in this study, Evarts and Stempel tracked election coverage from

Labor Day, the traditional start of the campaign period, to the day before the election to determine bias. No clear-cut bias could be found in their analysis of the media's election coverage that year. Johnson[14] and Hofstetter[15] also made use of a cross-media analysis to determine bias in election coverage, with mixed results.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research examines the partisan and structural balance of broadcast stories covering the 1998 governor's race in Michigan. Specifically, such partisan and structural balance are related to the prominence of the position of election stories in the newscast, the fairness of stories as indicated by whether they were one-sided or two-sided, and finally whether election stories were read by an anchor or presented as a package by an on-air reporter.

Further, this research seeks to illuminate factors influencing the structural balance of election stories. Specifically, this research takes Shoemaker and Reese's perspective that a hierarchy of influences shapes media content.[16] Shoemaker and Reese identify influences emanating from societal ideology, other social institutions, media organizational characteristics, work routines within media organizations and individual media worker characteristics.

Variables examined by this study as predictors of story structural balance include staff size at the organizational level, the station's total election story output and story prominence at the newsroom level, and whether stories were anchor reads or reporter packages at the individual journalist level. Studies have found that management's allocation of resources at the organizational level will affect reporting through staffing which will in turn influence total story output.[17] Obviously too, such story output will also be influenced by the norms at the newsroom

level which are controlled by news directors. Further, these personnel also influence where in a newscast a particular story will be broadcast, and thereby allocate the professional prestige valued by journalists.[18] Finally, these individual journalists themselves influence story content by the way they meld professional norms and their own perspectives and values into the final story package.[19]

The following research questions are therefore explored in this study:

RQ1: How does the partisan balance of stories vary with story position, fairness and packaging?

RQ2: How does the structural balance of stories vary with story position, fairness and packaging?

RQ3: How is the structural balance of stories influenced by station staff size, the station's electoral story output, the prominence of election stories and the packaging of election stories?

METHOD

This study explores these questions with a content analysis of all hard news election stories broadcast by four television stations on the 1998 Michigan governor's race. John Engler, the incumbent Republican governor, defeated Democrat Geoffrey Fieger in a campaign notable for the challenger's insulting attacks on the governor's personal appearance and family.

The four stations were selected from across the lower peninsula of Michigan. These stations were WXYZ-TV in Detroit, a No. 9 market station, WOOD-TV in Grand Rapids, a No. 38 market station, WJRT in Flint, a No. 64 market station, and WLNS-TV in Lansing, a No. 106 market station. Stations identified their major daily news broadcast and these were taped for the

study. The WXYZ and WJRT newscasts were an hour long. WOOD newscasts were a half-hour on weekdays and an hour on weekends. WLNS newscasts were a half-hour each day.

These broadcasts were taped from the Labor Day start of the campaign to voting on Nov. 3. Some newscasts were canceled because of sporting events. The final number recorded included 48 from WXYZ, 50 each from WJRT and WLNS, and 55 from WOOD.

Stations furnished information on the number of staff involved in their news operation. The total number of hard news stories (excluding weather and sports) were counted from the tapes.

Partisan and Structural Balance

Those election stories in which the candidates or their supporters made campaign-relevant partisan assertions were content analyzed. Such assertions were considered to be statements attributed to the candidates or their supporters that advocated or opposed a candidate's election. Stories containing only unattributed statements by the anchors or the reporter were not assessed. Further, stories that only reported poll results or that contained only visuals of the candidates but no assertions were also not assessed.

Qualities analyzed in stories containing partisan assertions included the position of the story in the newscast and whether the story was one-sided or included supporters for both candidates. Four story components were analyzed to assess partisan and structural balance of stories containing campaign assertions. Specifically, the story was analyzed to determine the side making assertions first in the story, the total time given sides for such assertions, whether visuals were included and whether the candidates were quoted directly on air or were paraphrased by reporters.

The Partisan Balance of a story was determined by counting how many of the four story components favored either Engler of Fieger. For example, if Fieger obtained more air time in a story than Engler, that story component was judged to favor his candidacy. If Fieger was favored by three story components and Engler by one, the story as a whole was judged to favor Fieger. The story was judged to be balanced if an equal number of components favored the candidates.

The Structural Balance of a story was similarly determined by counting how many story components favored each candidate. However, in the case of structural balance, the number of components favoring Fieger were subtracted from the number favoring Engler, and the absolute value of that figure taken. The resulting scale could range from 0, indicating a perfectly balanced story (and also one balanced on the partisan balance measure) to 4, indicating that the **same** candidate dominated every measured story component.

Validity and Reliability of Measures

Both Partisan and Structural Balance measures assume that broadcast stories are encountered once by viewers and that material presented first has a greater, if unknown, likelihood of being attended to than material later on. Consequently, components assessing the sides speaking first and longest dominate the scale, since visual elements or direct quotation may not always be part of a story.

Further, these balance measures assess the presence and position of partisan assertions, but make no assessment of the substantive qualities of the assertions themselves. Clearly, however, whether viewers find the assertions persuasive or not depends on the prior chance of exposure to the assertions themselves. Consequently, this study assesses the chances of such exposure to candidate assertions in the news.

Finally, these measures differ from those employed in past studies that assess the positive or negative tone or bias in the newscast. While such studies have achieved high coder reliability in such assessments, it is unclear whether ordinary viewers exposed to the newscasts in a naturalistic setting would make the same assessments. The present research makes no assumptions about how viewers might react to the candidate assertions in the newscast.

The coding procedure employed in this study had one researcher initially identify election-relevant stories and two other researchers confirm that judgment and code relevant stories. Two researchers subsequently performed a coder reliability assessment on **all** election stories containing campaign-relevant assertions, thereby producing an actual assessment of reliability rather than an estimate of it. No variable achieved less than a 90 percent agreement The Alpha Reliability for the four-item Structural Balance index was .92.

Analysis of Data

Research questions on differences in partisan and structural balance of election stories based on story position, fairness and packaging were addressed with story proportions and means. These data are from the universe of election stories, so findings do not require inferential statistics for generalization.

The research question probing influences on story structural balance was explored with regression analysis using variables that met appropriate statistical assumptions. Two regression equations were run. The first predicted the fairness of an election story based on station staff size, the station's total election stories, the prominence of the election stories, and whether a given story was a reporter package. These five variables were then used to predict a story's structural balance. Inferential statistics were used in these analyses only to emphasize substantively

important influences

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

Some 2,299 hard news stories were broadcast by the stations during the study period. These included 947 from WXYZ (41 percent of the total), 595 from WOOD (26 percent) 408 from WJRT (18 percent) and 349 from WLNS (15 percent).

Further, all governor's election stories were also counted. Some 86 stories (3.7 percent of all stories) explicitly mentioned the governor's race, contenders John Engler or Geoffrey Fieger, poll reports, campaign events or candidate supporters or opponents. WOOD in Grand Rapids had the greatest number of election stories, with its 27 making up 4.7 percent of its total. WXYZ had the fewest election stories with its 17 making up 1.8 percent of all its stories.

Some 64 of these stories included campaign-relevant assertions and were further content analyzed. Few of these stories were featured prominently in newscasts. Fewer than 10 percent led newscasts. Some six in ten of the election stories were completely one-sided. About 4 in ten of the election stories were reporter packages.

Partisan Balance of Stories

Democrat Geoffrey Fieger dominated the partisan balance of just 52 percent of the election stories, with Engler dominating 42 percent and the rest evenly divided. By station, WJRT and WOOD broadcast stories favoring Fieger by 64-36 and 67-28 margins respectively, while WJRT and WLNS ran stories favoring Engler by 50-43 and 57-33 margins respectively. Fieger also dominated three of the four components of the partisan index. More than three-fifths of the time he was the first candidate presented. He was slightly more likely to have more time in stories

than Engler and was slightly more likely to have visuals of his campaign presented. Engler, however, was slightly more likely to be quoted, in stories, with 27 percent of stories compared to 22 percent for Fieger.

Stories that led newscasts were more likely to be balanced than stories that ran later in the newscast or election stories that followed other election stories (See Table 1). Unfair or one-sided stories were interestingly more likely to favor Engler, while two-sided or fair stories were more likely to be dominated by Fieger (See Table 2). Finally, reporter packages were more likely than those read by anchors to be balanced, or if one-sided, offsetting so that an Engler-dominated story was answered by a Fieger-dominated one.

Structural Balance of Stories

Overall, viewers had only a one in four chance of encountering either a perfectly balanced story (6 percent of the total) or a story imbalanced by only one component. By contrast, viewers had better than a 4 in 10 chance of encountering a story imbalanced toward the same candidate in every measured way.

The mean structural balance score of stories was 2.8 on a scale of 0, indicating a perfectly balanced story, to 4, indicating that the same candidate dominated every component measure. (See Table 4). Stories dominated by Engler on the partisan balance scale were also more structurally imbalanced than stories dominated by Fieger..

Similarly to the pattern in the partisan balance, election stories that led newscasts were less imbalanced than those run elsewhere. (See Table 4). Not surprisingly, one-sided stories tended to be much more imbalanced than two-sided ones. Finally, reporter packages were less imbalanced structurally than those read by anchors.

Influences on Structural Balance of Stories

The prominence of election stories and reporter packaging were the most important influences on the fairness of the election stories. (See Table 5). Possibly news directors were more concerned that highly visible stories be more fair. And given that reporter packages required more time and effort, reporters may well have been able to plan fairness into the coverage they gave some campaign issue or event.

The structural balance of a story was largely influenced by the packaging of the story and its fairness. (See Table 5) Obviously a story that was unfair in its sourcing would be imbalanced in its structure. However, reporters able to put more time and effort into a story's package did not necessarily shape the content to be more balanced.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

Few stories were broadcast about the governor's race in Michigan, a finding consistent with other studies of such races in other states. Further, only three-quarters of those stories broadcast included the kind of assertions by electoral partisans that might arguably have informed or persuaded voters. Finally, very few of even those stories were fair and balanced by the standards used in this study.

Interestingly, these findings were virtually unrelated to staff size at the stations studied, a factor that intuitively might have produced more attention to story qualities such as fairness and balance. Rather, those factors most importantly related to fairness and balance were more grounded in the journalistic values of news directors and reporters. Directors showcased those stories more likely to emphasize those content qualities. And when reporters assumed the most

creative control over a story, they were more likely to build those content qualities into the work.

It is possible that the structural qualities found in these stories influence the judgments of bias that viewers exposed to them might make. Experimental treatments, surveys and focus groups should be conducted to determine if this is so. But certainly this study illuminates that the professional concern for fairness and balance is not articulated in a great many stories that are aired.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research highlight the different ways in which broadcast news personnel and TV viewers perceive local TV election coverage. Those differences are of consequence because the journalist's opinion that local election coverage is fair and balanced in both a partisan and structural manner may be at variance with the opinion held by the viewer. And it matters because the fact, and perception, of fairness and balance in reporting is critical for the operation of a democratic society as well as the functioning of the mass media. Taken as a whole, there was reasonable fairness and balance between stories covering John Engler and those covering Geoffrey Fieger. For example, the partisan balance tipped in favor of Fieger in slightly more than half of the stories. On the other hand, Engler was marginally favored in all of the stories that featured a quote from the candidate. A news director sitting back at the end of an election season might well be satisfied in the overall coverage for, in toto, all things were rather equal from a broadcast news manager's perch. This perspective, however, does not recognize the way in which the TV viewer takes in the coverage. While fairness and balance may have existed over the course of the entire election coverage, it hardly existed in individual stories and packages. As measured

both in terms of partisan balance and structural balance, individual stories were substantially lacking in balance and fairness. In any given setting, the viewer had a one in four chance of seeing a perfectly balanced story. In fact, 40 percent of the time, the viewer was likely to see a story that was imbalanced in every measured way. This research suggests that broadcast news personnel and TV viewers are grabbing different parts of the elephant. One party finds coverage that is fair and balanced in both partisan and structural ways. The other party is likely to be convinced of the opposite as stories are viewed individually and not seen in the aggregate. Broadcast news managers might be well-advised to step out of their video-inundated newsrooms and look at their coverage of local elections the way their audience does. They, quite possibly, will see another part of the elephant.

Table 1: Partisan Domination of Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race by Election Story Prominence in the Newscast (Percent of Stories Favoring Engler or Fieger)

	Leads Newscast	First Or Only Story	Second Story
Favors Engler	33%	43%	44%
Favors Fieger	50%	51%	56%
Balanced	17%	6%	0%
N	6	49	9

Table 2: Partisan Balance of Unfair and Fair Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race. (Percent of Stories favoring Engler or Fieger)

	Unfair Stories	Fair Stories	All Stories
Favors Engler	54%	24%	42%
Favors Fieger	46%	60%	52%
Balanced	0%	16%	6%
N	39	25	64

Table 3: Partisan Balance of Anchor Reads and Reporter Packages on 1998 Governor's Race (Percent of Stories favoring Engler or Fieger)

	Anchor Read	Reporter Package
Favors Engler	40%	45%
Favors Fieger	57%	45%
Balanced	3%	10%
N	35	29

Table 4: Structural Balance of Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race (Mean Structural Balance Scores. Higher scores indicate more story **im**balance.)

	Mean Score	N
All Stories	2.80	64
Partisan Domination		
Favors Engler	3.19	27
Favors Fieger	2.82	33
Story Prominence		
Leads Newscast	1.83	6
First/Only Story	2.86	49
Second Story	3.11	9
Story Fairness		
One-sided	3.51	39
Two-sided	1.68	25
Story Type		
Anchor Reader	2.89	35
Package	2.69	29

Table 5: Influences on Story Fairness and Structural Balance in Stories on the 1998 Governor's Race (Coefficients are Betas. Betas significant at least at 05 level are in bold. Positive Betas indicate greater story fairness and greater story **im**balance.)

	Story Fairness	Structural Balance
Station Staff Size	.06	.10
Station's Total Election Stories	.16	-.04
Story's Newscast Prominence	**.27**	.01
Reporter Story Package	**.31**	**.21**
Story Fairness	---	**-.75**
Explained Variance	.18	.46
Equation Significance	.004	.000

ENDNOTES

1.See Cecilie Gaziano, "How Credible is the Credibility Crisis?" *Journalism Quarterly* 65 (Summer 1988): 267-278; Cecilie Gaziano and Kristin McGarth, "Measuring the Concept of Credibility," *Journalism Quarterly* 63 (Autumn 1986): 451-462.

2. "Project will study fairness in media," The Freedom Forum News, 24 February 1997, p. 1.

3. See, for example, David Domke, David P. Fan, Michael Fibison, Dhavan V. Shah, Steven Smith and Mark D. Watts, "News Media, Candidates and Issues, and Public Opinion in the 1996 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (Winter 1997): 718-737; Dru Evarts and Guido H. Stempel III, "Coverage of the 1972 Campaign by TV, News Magazines and Major Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 51 (Winter 1974): 645-676; C. Richard Hofstetter, *Bias in the News: A Study of Network News Coverage of the 1972 Election Campaign*, (Columbus; Ohio State University Press, 1976); C. Richard Hofstetter, "Perception of News Bias in 1972 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism Quarterly* 56 (Summer 1979): 370-374; C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, "Bias in Television News Coverage of Political Events: A Methodological Analysis," *Journal of Broadcasting* 22 (Fall 1978): 517-530; Dennis T. Lowry and Jon A. Shidler, "The Sound Bites, the Biters, and the Bitten: An Analysis of Network TV News Bias in Campaign '92," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (Spring 1995): 33-44.

4. Thomas J. Johnson, "Filling Out the Racing Form: How the Media Covered the Horse Race in the 1988 Primaries," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (Summer 1993):300 - 310.

5. David Domke, David P. Fan, Michael Fibison, Dhavan V. Shah, Steven Smith and Mark D. Watts, "News Media, Candidates and Issues, and Public Opinion in the 1996 Presidential Campaign," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (Winter 1997): 718-737.

6. Domke, "News Media," 719.

7. Dennis T. Lowry and Jon A. Shidler, "The Sound Bites, the Biters, and the Bitten: An Analysis of Network TV News Bias in Campaign '92," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 72 (Spring 1995): 33-44.

8. Todd S. Purdum, "TV Political News in California Is Shrinking, Study Confirms," *New York Times*, 31 January 1999, A11.

9. Purdum, "TV Political News in California," A11.

10. Johnson, "The Seven Dwarfs and Other Tales: How the Networks and Select Newspapers Covered the 1988 Democratic Primaries," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (Summer 1993): 311 - 320.

11. Johnson, "The Seven Dwarfs," 318.

12. C. Richard Hofstetter and Terry F. Buss, "Bias in Television News Coverage of Political Events: A Methodological Analysis," *Journal of Broadcasting* 21 (Spring 1997): 177-186.

13. Dru Evarts and Guido H. Stempel III, "Coverage of the 1972 Campaign by TV, News Magazines and Major Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 51 (Winter 1974): 645-676.

14. Johnson, "The Seven Dwarfs," 313.

15. C. Richard Hofstetter, "News Bias in the 1972 Campaign: A Cross-Media Analysis," *Journalism Monographs* 58 (November 1978): 1-30.

16. Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content*. 2nd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996).

17. Stephen Lacy, Frederick Fico and Todd Simon, "The Relationships Among Economic News Room and Content Variables: A Path Model," *Newspaper Research Journal* 12 (Winter 1991): 34-45; Stephen Lacy, "The Financial Commitment Approach to News Media Competition," *Journal of Media Economics* 5 (Summer 1992): 5-22.

18. Breed identified such influences as the "newsroom socialization of reporters." See Warren Breed, "Social Control in the Newsroom." *Social Forces* 33 (May 1955): 326-335.

19. See, for example, Frederick Fico, "Perceived Roles and Editorial Concerns Influence Reporters in Two Statehouses." *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (Winter 1985): 784-790; Frederick Fico, "Influence of Perceived Editorial Concern and Role Self-Concept on Source Reliance of Reporters in Two State Houses." *Journalism Quarterly* 63 (Summer 1986): 322-330.

The Effects of Competition on Television Coverage of City Hall

by

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The Effects of Competition on Television Coverage of City Hall

by

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A national sample of 303 television reporters found no correlation between the number of news organizations covering city hall and journalists' perceptions of how competition affected their coverage. However, 40 percent or more of the journalists said television competition increased the number of city hall stories produced, made it more difficult to do in-depth city hall stories, and increased the coverage of stories that might have been missed otherwise. Newspaper competition was perceived as putting greater pressure on TV journalists to produce more stories and to cover news they otherwise might have overlooked.

Effects of Competition on Television Coverage of City Hall

National samples of U.S. metropolitan areas indicate local television news often outstrips network newscasts in use.[1] Due to the expansion of local television news over the past 35 years, every major metropolitan area boasts three or more television stations that battle for news consumers' attention.

The expanding number of television news operations has raised the question of whether this competition, or its potential, affects TV news coverage. Even though some research indicates an impact of competition on financial commitment,[2] no published research has studied the impact of "sociological" competition on coverage. This competition involves journalists reacting to the coverage of other journalists, rather than management allocating financial resources.[3]

This study examines television reporters' perceptions of the impact of television and newspaper competition on their stations' city hall coverage. This paper is part of a larger study of city hall coverage that isolated one beat in order to control for the variation of reporting across beats. Local government was selected because this has been a traditional area in which journalists exercise their government watchdog function. In addition, local television news has been far less studied than newspapers and network newscasts despite its being a dominant force in the American news industry.

Research into newspaper competition has demonstrated a positive impact on content available to the community.[4] However, that competition continues to decline as daily newspapers close and newspaper companies buy potential competitors in a process known as clustering. These clusters create economic advantages for the newspaper groups, but they reduce competition.[5] The decline of daily newspaper competition raises the question of whether competition among television news operations or between the local newspaper and local television news might affect local television coverage available to a community. This research begins to study such an impact.

Literature Review

Because of the scant research on competition and city hall coverage, this review will look primarily at the effects of local television and daily newspaper competition on news content. A connection has been found between newspaper competition and the amount of money spent on the editorial product.[6] Competitive newspapers had larger newsholes, more reporters per amount of news space, and more wire services. This relationship between competition and newsroom expenditures is termed the "financial commitment" model.[7]

In addition to research using content and financial data, the model is supported by a national survey that examined newspaper journalists' perceptions of the impact of competition on editorial content and journalistic performance.[8] The Coulson and Lacy study considers more than budgetary factors in exploring four sociological effects of direct competition. Most of the respondents believed that competing dailies promote higher quality local news coverage, greater editorial diversity, and competitiveness among journalists. But competition also was seen as having a negative influence -- increased sensationalism.

A 1997 survey found newspaper journalists perceived newspaper competition to be more likely to affect city hall coverage than television news competition. Television competition had an impact in a small percentage of markets and was most likely to affect content when there was no competition from a daily newspaper. Probably the most interesting finding was that editors were perceived as having a great deal of influence on how beat competition affects city hall coverage.[9]

Consistent with newspaper research, local television news research has shown a relationship between competition and financial commitment in the form of greater expenditures on local news,[10] more minutes of local news,[11] more full-time staff and bigger newsroom budgets,[12] acquisition of satellite news-gathering vehicles,[13] and more resources used to assemble stories on local news programs.[14]

In other research, about half of the stories covered in local competing newscasts in three cities were unique. The news directors' conscious effort to differentiate their newscasts[15] is consistent with the financial commitment model. It is more expensive and time consuming to

develop stories that other stations will not have than to depend upon beat sources and press releases, but the unique stories were used to differentiate the newscasts to attract viewers.

Although research on both daily newspaper and local television news indicates that media competition can affect expenditures and content, little research has explored the way in which news competition can affect decisions of journalists and their supervisors about day-to-day coverage. This type of research is meaningful because of the important programming changes television news has undergone during the past 15 years. Today many local newscasts last one to two hours. As a result they include a greater amount of local news, but the proportion of time devoted to local news has remained stable. Often stations expanding their newscast length do not sufficiently increase their staff to fill the added time with an equivalent amount of local news.[16] Such findings suggest that the length of newscasts may affect content.

Two studies about local news conducted during the 1970s and early 1980s were consistent in their results. The content of television newscasts in San Diego was found to deal primarily with local news, and most stories dealt with issues and spot news.[17] Pennsylvania television stations tended to cover their central city and county more extensively than other cities in the area of dominant influence.[18] Since these studies, local television news content has changed. In a follow-up to the Pennsylvania study, researchers found 10 stations provided less city hall coverage in 1992 than in 1976.[19]

City hall is the most logical location of news generation for the community, but the only beats consistently worked by reporters at three network-affiliated stations in the West were courts and police. The stories aired from those beats suggested that they were staffed as economical access points to dramatic events, rather than as an attempt to report on how two arms of the community's justice system work.[20]

Research Questions

Given the scarcity of research on the impact of competition on city hall coverage, this study explores the following research questions:

1. To what degree and in what ways do television reporters perceive television news competition affects television coverage of city hall?

This question presumes that television competition influences the behavior of at least some television reporters who cover city hall. The respondents' answers address the degree and nature of these effects.

2. To what degree and in what ways do television reporters perceive newspaper competition affects television coverage of city hall?

This question expands the scope of the inquiry to competition between television and newspapers. The Lacy, Coulson and St. Cyr survey of newspaper journalists found that newspaper competition is perceived as having an impact on local government coverage.[21] However, how television journalists view the relationship between newspaper competition and city hall reporting has not been investigated previously.

3. Are news director-reporter discussions of television competition's impact related to television reporters' perceptions of variations in city hall coverage?

Television competition may have a direct impact on city hall reporting, but it is also likely that the coverage is influenced by interaction between news directors and reporters. For instance, reporters need to talk with their news directors about the number, type and length of city hall stories.

This research question is represented by the path model in Figure 1. The model illustrates that increased competition on the city hall beat is related to a greater likelihood that news directors and reporters will discuss this competition (step 1). The possible impact of this discussion being linked to content is represented by step 3. The model also suggests a direct correlation between beat competition and content (step 2).

4. Are news director-reporter discussions of newspaper competition's impact related to television reporters' perceptions of variations in city hall coverage?

This question is the same as research question 3 other than it applies to newspaper competition with television newscasts. The path model in Figure 1 also is applicable here.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Method

Two network-affiliated stations were randomly selected for this survey from each of the 214 television areas of dominant influence in the United States. Telephone calls were made to the stations' newsrooms to obtain the names of reporters most likely to cover city hall. The result was 459 reporters' names at 428 television stations. Each reporter was sent a questionnaire: 17 were undeliverable. Of the 442 potential respondents, 303 returned questionnaires for a 69 percent response rate.

The survey was conducted in three waves during spring 1997. The first wave included the questionnaire, cover letter and a return envelope. Next a post card was sent reminding the reporters of the questionnaire and telling them they would receive another one in about two weeks if they had misplaced it. The third wave was the same as the first and followed the post card by about two weeks.

Close-ended questions involved seven-point scales. Responses ranged from strongly disagree, which received a one, to strongly agree, which received a seven.

Answers to research questions 1 and 2 were based on proportions of respondents replying to statements about five possible effects of competition on content. These statements appear below. Open-ended responses also were analyzed to determine perceived influences on city hall coverage that were not foreseen with close-ended questions.

Research questions 3 and 4 were answered with least-squares multiple regression analysis applied to the path model in Figure 1. The dependent variables for the analysis of television competition were responses to the following statements:

* My news director and I discuss how competition from television news affects our station's city hall coverage.
* Television news competition increases how many city hall stories I write.

* Television news competition makes it harder for me to find time to do in-depth city hall stories.
* Television news competition makes me report city hall stories I don't think are important.
* Television news competition makes me report city hall stories I otherwise might have missed.
* Television news competition makes me sensationalize city hall news.

Similar statements were used to analyze newspaper competition, but the term "television news competition" was replaced with the term "newspaper competition."

The independent variables included reporter and news director interaction, years reporters have covered city hall, number of television stations covering city hall every day, and number of daily newspapers covering city hall every day. The last two variables were used as measures of competition, and the number of years covering city hall was used as a control variable.

Data were analyzed to see if they fit the assumptions of multiple regression. Years spent covering city hall stories, number of television stations covering city hall on a daily basis, and number of dailies covering city hall on a daily basis showed skewness figures greater than 1 and had outliers.[22]

The outliers were reassigned the value of three standard deviations from the mean to reduce their effect but to retain the cases. This decreased the skewness. However, years covering city hall continued to have skewness figures close to 2. A means of correcting for skewness is to use the natural log of the cases. This was done. But the increase in the coefficient of determination (multiple r-squared) was minimal and none of the conclusions would have been changed by use of logged data.

This study assumes that television reporters who cover city hall stories hold perceptions of how competition affects their behavior that are somewhat valid representations of reality. Although there is certainly measurement error involved, it seems logical that reporters would have some idea

of how their decisions are connected to external factors. This assumption underlies the use of many, if not most, surveys about behavior.

Results

Sixty-four percent of the television reporters were male, and 78 percent of the respondents had completed college. The average age of the reporters was 33. They ranged in age from 22 to 66 years old, with a standard deviation of 9.3.

Average television reporting experience was 10.4 years, with a standard deviation of 9.1 and a range of three months to 42 years. They had worked at their current station an average of 5.5 years, with a standard deviation of 6.4 and a range of two months to 36 years.

On average they had covered city hall for 4.6 years, with a standard deviation of 5.5. The range of this experience was two months to 36 years. City hall was the only assignment for 5 percent of them. This statistic indicates most local television news covers city hall with general assignment reporters, which runs counter to the newspaper beat system where specialty reporters cover city hall.

Extent of Competition

The average number of stations within a market covering city hall was 2.95, with a standard deviation of 1.0 and a range of zero to 6.0. On average, newspapers covering city hall in a market on a daily basis totaled 1.22, with a standard deviation of .70 and a range of zero to 3.0.

The average number of daily newspapers covering city hall differed by television market size.[23] Television reporters in large markets indicated an average of 1.54 dailies covered the beat compared to those in mid-size markets who reported an average of 1.19 dailies. Reporters in small markets indicated city hall was covered by an average of 1.09 dailies. These daily newspaper averages represent the continued existence of joint operating agreements,[24] a few morning-afternoon combinations, and the existence of intercity competition within counties.

Overall, these results suggest strong competition among news organizations covering city hall in television markets. In the large markets an average of nearly four news operations reported each weekday on city hall.

Impact of Competition

Research question 1 asks "To what degree and in what ways do television reporters perceive television news competition affects television coverage of city hall?" Data in Table 1 indicates variations in television reporters' perceptions of the impact of television beat competition across markets and types of news coverage statements.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Three of the statements show nearly equal percentages of responses when the three agree and three disagree categories are collapsed into two categories -- agree and disagree. Forty-five percent of the respondents disagreed that television competition increased the number of city hall stories they produced; 41 percent agreed.

Forty-eight percent of the reporters said that television competition made it difficult to find time to do in-depth stories about city hall, and 41 percent felt otherwise. Similarly, 46 percent of the respondents indicated that television competition caused them to report municipal government stories they otherwise might have missed, and 41 percent differed.

The variation for the other two statements was much greater. Nearly two-thirds of the reporters disagreed that television competition made them report unimportant city hall stories, compared to 28 percent who agreed. An even higher percentage of respondents, 74 percent, disagreed that television competition made them sensationalize local government news, while only 21 percent agreed.

The second research question asks "To what degree and in what ways do television reporters perceive newspaper competition affects television coverage of city hall?" By collapsing data in Table 2 to categories of agree and disagree, the results suggest that television reporters vary less in their perceptions about newspaper competition's effects on the coverage than they do about

television's effects. However, they also perceived newspaper competition to have a greater impact than television competition in two areas -- number of city hall stories reported and coverage of stories that otherwise might have been missed.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Fifty-three percent of the television reporters agreed that newspaper competition increased the number of city hall stories they wrote, compared to 36 percent who disagreed. Three-quarters of them admitted that newspaper competition prompted them to report stories they otherwise might have missed, while only 17 percent disagreed.

Respondents indicated much less of an impact of newspaper competition with regard to the other three statements in Table 2. Two-thirds of them said that newspaper competition made it harder to find time to do in-depth city hall stories; 20 percent felt otherwise. Similarly, 68 percent disagreed that newspaper competition made them report unimportant municipal government stories, compared to a quarter who agreed.

The least perceived impact of newspaper competition related to sensationalism. Eight out of ten respondents disagreed that newspaper competition made them sensationalize city hall news. Only 14 percent agreed.

Open-ended Responses

When television reporters spoke positively about the effects of television and newspaper competition on their city hall reporting, they emphasized timeliness, aggressiveness, sharpened news judgment, and increased productivity.

Negative aspects of competition for television reporters covering the beat included too much reliance on newspapers as agenda setters, time constraints associated with general assignment reporting, lack of adequate time to develop, report and present the often complex stories, and problems related to visualization of the stories, especially routine city government meetings.

In competing with newspaper journalists on the city hall beat, television reporters stressed developing new angles. These included "live" reports, different approaches, new details, and a new or different source. The most common strategy was to "personalize" city government decisions to try to show how they affected people.

Impact of News Director-Reporter Interaction

Research question 3 asks: "Are news director-reporter discussions of television competition's impact related to television reporters' perceptions of variations in city hall coverage?" The question was examined using regression analysis with the five statements in Table 1 serving as the dependent variable. The relationships are shown by the path model in Figure 1.

Table 3 presents beta weights from the regression analysis. In addition to the news director-reporter interactions, the regression equations included years covering city hall stories, the rankings of the stations with regard to ratings, and the number of other stations covering city hall.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Overall, the conclusion is that little variance is accounted for by the equations, with the r-squared ranging from .018 to .071. The only notable relationship was with the responses to the statement that television competition increases the number of city hall stories that reporters produce. The entire regression explained about 7 percent of the variance in these responses, with news director-reporter interaction being the only important independent variable. The relationship was positive that indicates reporters who discussed the impact of television competition with their news directors were more likely to agree that television competition increases the number of stories they produce.

Also of interest in Table 3 is the negative relationship in the first equation between the number of television stations in a market covering city hall and whether news directors and reporters discuss the competition. As the number of stations increased, the reporters were more likely to disagree that they talked about the competition with news directors.

Because the number of television stations is a function of market size, an additional regression equation was run that included size of market.[25] The r-squared increased to .068, and the impact of number of stations almost disappeared. The beta weight in the new regression for news director-reporter discussion was -.030, while the beta for market size was -.221. The betas for the other two independent variables in the Table 3 equation changed only slightly.

The additional regression equation suggests that as market size increased, reporters were less likely to state that they discussed the impact of television competition on city hall coverage with their news directors. This may reflect the relationship between market size and journalistic experience. Smaller markets have less experienced reporters. The Pearson's correlation coefficient between market size and experience was .31.

The fourth research question asks: "Are news director-reporter discussions of newspaper competition's impact related to television reporters' perceptions of variations in city hall coverage?" Data in Table 4 indicate the answer is yes, although the degree of impact varies among the five statements.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

The r-squared for the regression equations in Table 4 vary from .253 to .014. However, in all the equations the only notable beta weights were for news director and reporter discussions of the impact of newspaper competition.

The strongest relationship was with the statement that newspaper competition increases the number of city hall stories television reporters write. Nearly 24 percent of the variance in reporters' responses to this statement was explained by their perceptions of discussions with news directors about the impact of newspaper competition. Reporters who were more likely to say they talked with their news director about newspaper competition were more likely to say such competition increased the number of city hall stories they produced.

Although the influence was considerably less, television reporters who were likely to say they discussed the impact of newspaper competition on city hall coverage with their news director were more likely to agree that newspaper competition made it harder to find time to do in-depth

stories (part correlation squared = .049),[26] made them report stories they thought were unimportant (part correlation squared = .04), made them report stories they otherwise might have missed (part correlation squared = .078), and made them sensationalize the stories (part correlation squared = 0.32). The strength of the relationship in all these equations was small, ranging from 3.2 percent to 7.8 percent of explained variance.

Conclusions

Although several news organizations covered the city hall beat in these markets, regression analysis found no direct impact of number of news organizations on the journalists' perceptions of how competition affects coverage. Despite the lack of correlations, roughly 40 percent or more of the journalists indicated that television competition increased the number of stories produced, made it more difficult to find time to do in-depth stories, and increased the coverage of stories that might have been missed. The inconsistency between the journalists' response and the regression analysis suggest that competition on a beat is not related to number of news organizations, but to some sociological interaction among the journalists on that beat.

The fairly even distribution of responses across seven response categories for the three statements mentioned in the previous paragraph indicates that television competition may be affecting content in some markets but not in others. This should not be surprising because sociological competition reflects individual journalists' reactions to competition. One journalist may not respond in the same way as another one to the same competitive journalist.

The variation among journalists also may reflect the approaches taken by various local newsrooms. A content analysis of 61 local newscasts found wide variance in whether a television newsroom pursued quality journalism. Quality was defined as news coverage with a wide range of sources, viewpoints, and topics, as well as coverage with depth, enterprise and local relevance. Some stations provided quality while other broadcast mostly crime, car crashes and other breaking news with strong visual content.[27] The difference in types of newscasts was supported by open-ended comments in this survey.

The variation among reporters was not as great with two other statements. Most reporters agreed that television competition did not make them report unimportant stories and sensationalize municipal government news. Often the selection practice at television stations favors stories high in entertainment value over those high in consequence as a matter of routine rather than a matter of competition.[28]

Respondents expressed the belief that newspaper competition had much less impact on certain facets of their city hall coverage than did television competition. At the same time, newspaper competition was seen as putting greater pressure on them to write more stories and to cover news they otherwise might have ignored. Some reporters said the competition prompted them to create new story angles, such as "humanizing" local government decisions in an attempt to make them more meaningful to the average viewers.

Reporters in small markets were more inclined to interact with their news directors about issues related to television and newspaper competition. This may reflect the relationship between market size and staff size. Small markets employ fewer seasoned reporters .

Discussions between news directors and reporters about the effects of newspaper competition had a greater influence on city hall beat coverage than discussions about television competition's impact. The talks about newspaper competition appeared to induce reporters to produce more local government news. Other research indicates that television stations reported fewer stories on city hall in the early 1990s than in the mid-1970s[29] despite its accessibility for information important to people's civic awareness.

The vast majority of variation in television reporters' responses was not explained by independent variables in the regression equation. Perceptions of content variation were only slightly correlated with the number of news organizations in the market. Other variables were more important, although newspaper competition had a notable impact on the number of city hall stories reported.

A comparison of the findings from this survey with those of the study based on newspaper reporters' concepts of city hall beat competition[30] indicates an asymmetrical relationship between

local television news and daily newspapers. Newspaper reporters were much less likely to perceive variations in the impact of television competition on city hall coverage than television reporters were to perceive such variations in the coverage from newspaper competition. Furthermore, television reporters discerned practically no variations in the effects of television competition on city hall coverage, whereas their newspaper counterparts sensed much stronger variations in the impact of newspaper competition on the coverage.

The interesting implication is that newspaper competition has a direct and indirect impact on city hall coverage within a community. The direct impact affects newspaper reporters' content, and the indirect impact affects the discussion between news directors and TV reporters about the beat competition. This discussion in turn affects content. This suggests that the historic reduction in newspaper competition has had a double impact on coverage of city hall. The implications are noteworthy when it is realized that most news consumers look to newspapers for their local government coverage.[31]

This study's findings on the relationship between television and newspaper competition and city hall reporting raise some questions for related future research. How do television reporters who perceive an impact of television competition on city hall coverage differ from those who reported no impact? How do news directors and reporters interact in their discussions about competition, and do the news directors dominate the interaction? Do the journalistic skills of reporters affect how they cover a beat, and how they react to other reporters given a similar assignment? How can sociological competition best be measured?

The study is limited because it did not include news directors, who may well perceive the impact of competition differently than do reporters. Although perceptions provide insight into the dynamics of competition, an important step would be to validate these perceptions through content analysis. It would be valuable to know whether the television reporters' views about the effects of news media competition on city hall beat coverage are consistent with more objective analyses of content.

This study could be applied to other beats to determine if competition affects journalistic performance and news content. For instance, does competition influence coverage of the police, courts and education beats? Does it have a different effect on cultural beats, such as ethnicity, than on traditional organization beats?

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22. Outliers were defined as cases with values greater or less than three standard deviations from the mean. In all cases the outliers were on the positive side of this range.

23 The 214 television areas of dominant influence were categorized into three market sizes: small -- ranked smaller than 125 other markets, medium -- ranked 51 to 125 in market size, and large -- ranked among the 50 largest markets.

24. Joint operating agreements occur when two dailies in the same city combine all their business operations but maintain separate newsrooms. Seventeen cities were listed with JOAs in early 1998 in David C. Coulson and Stephen Lacy, "Newspapers and Joint Operating Agreements," in W. David Sloan and Emily Erickson Hoff, eds., *Contemporary Media Issues* (Northport, AL: Vision Press, 1998), 206, but the joint ventures in Nashville and El Paso closed during 1998.

25. To check if market size affected the relationship in the other regression equations in tables 3 and 4, additional regressions were run with market size included. In all cases, the result was either

no increase in r-squared or only minor, 1 percent or less, increases. The conclusion was that market size did not affect the reporters' perceptions in any of these questions.

26. The part correlation squared is the unique variance shared by the dependent and independent variable after the influence of all other independent variables in the regression equation has been removed.

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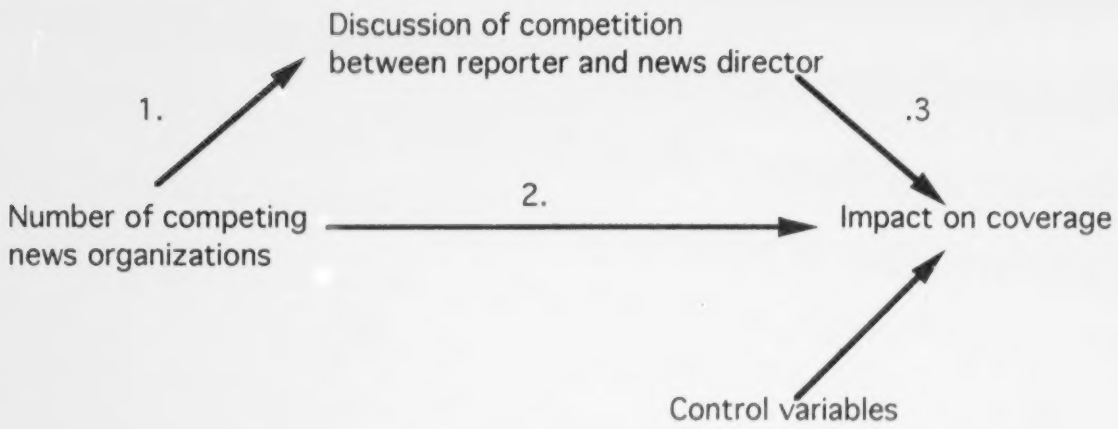

Figure 1: Path model for the impact of beat competition on news coverage of city hall

Table 1

The Impact of Television Competition on Television City Hall Coverage

Responses	Local television news competition:				
	increases how many city hall stories I produce.	makes it harder for me to find time to do indepth city hall stories.	makes me report city hall stories I don't think are important.	makes me report city hall news I otherwise might have missed.	makes me sensationalize city hall news.
Strongly disagree	11%	13%	23%	11%	39%
Disagree	17%	16%	27%	16%	19%
Somewhat disagree	17%	12%	15%	14%	16%
Not sure	14%	11%	7%	13%	5%
Somewhat agree	24%	14%	11%	27%	11%
Agree	12%	17%	9%	14%	5%
Strongly agree	5%	17%	8%	5%	5%
Mean	3.8	4.2	3.1	3.9	2.7
N	245	245	247	245	247

Table 2

The Impact of Newspaper Competition on Television City Hall Coverage

Responses	Competition from newspapers:				
	increases how many city hall stories I produce.	makes it harder for me to find time to do indepth city hall news stories.	makes me report city hall stories I don't think are important.	makes me report city hall news I otherwise might have missed.	makes me sensationalize city hall news.
Strongly disagree	11%	27%	27%	5%	43%
Disagree	10%	23%	25%	7%	24%
Somewhat disagree	15%	16%	16%	5%	13%
Not sure	11%	16%	7%	8%	6%
Somewhat agree	29%	10%	12%	31%	9%
Agree	13%	6%	8%	25%	3%
Strongly agree	11%	2%	5%	19%	2%
Mean	4.2	2.84	2.97	5.04	2.32
N	261	264	264	263	264

Table 3

Beta Weights for Path Model in Figure 1 for Local Television News Competition

Independent variables	Dependent Variables[a]					
	News director & reporter discuss the impact of TV competition.	TV competition increases the # of city hall stories I produce.	TV competition makes it hard to find time to do indepth city hall stories.	TV competition makes me report unimportant city hall stories.	TV competition makes me report city hall stories I might have missed.	TV competition makes me sensationalize city hall news.
News director & reporter discuss the impact of TV competition	Not applicable	.257	.095	.048	.151	.104
Years covering city hall	-.081	-.062	.083	-.076	-.054	.054
Station's market ranking	-.037	-.004	-.013	.060	.130	.111
Number of TV stations covering city hall	-.153	.043	.066	-.070	-.018	.063
R-squared	.038	.071	.018	.019	.043	.029
Degrees of freedom	3,212	4,211	4,211	4,211	4,209	4,211

[a] All dependent variables were measured by responses on a seven-point scale from strongly disagree equaling one and strongly agree equaling seven.

Table 4

Beta Weights for Path Model in Figure 1 for Newspaper Competition

Independent variables	Dependent Variables[a] News director & reporter discuss the impact of NP competition.	NP competition increases the # of city hall stories I produce.	NP competition makes it hard to find time to do indepth city hall stories.	NP competition makes me report unimportant city hall stories.	NP competition makes me report city hall stories I might have missed.	NP competition makes me sensationalize city hall news.
News director & reporter discuss the impact of NP competition	Not applicable	.492	.222	.201	.281	.181
Years covering city hall	.039	-.034	-.017	-.060	-.009	.181
Station's market ranking	-.078	-.051	.038	-.066	-.014	.021
Number of TV stations covering city hall daily	-.071	.015	-.109	-.112	.035	-.032
Number of dailies covering city hall	.031	-.068	.096	.091	.068	.024
R-squared	.014	.253	.070	.072	.084	.069
Degrees of freedom	4,220	5,218	5,219	5,219	5,219	5,219

[a] All dependent variables were measured by responses on a seven-point scale from strongly disagree equaling one and strongly agree equaling seven.

TELEVISION NETWORK AFFILIATION CHANGES IN A MAJOR MARKET AND THE EFFECT ON NEWS VIEWING

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TELEVISION NETWORK AFFILIATION CHANGES IN A MAJOR MARKET AND THE EFFECT ON NEWS VIEWING

Abstract

In most studies of the reasons why viewers tune in to any given television program, the effects of program loyalty, channel loyalty, and network loyalty may be somewhat difficult to separate. Network affiliation changes will offer a naturally occurring opportunity to observe these effects. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine which of these concepts would determine news viewing in a major market after experiencing a network affiliation change.

TELEVISION NETWORK AFFILIATION CHANGES IN A MAJOR MARKET AND THE EFFECT ON NEWS VIEWING

> There can be no better scenario through which to monitor and evaluate viewing patterns and preferences than when local television stations change network affiliation. (Abelman, Atkin, & Rand, 1997, p. 363)

News viewing levels are of considerable importance to both television network news operations and local television news departments because of the major profit potential of news. Research examining viewing patterns of news, as well as other forms of programming, has grown, lending support for concepts such as channel loyalty, network loyalty, program loyalty, and lead-in effects.

In the period encompassing 1994 and 1995, numerous television markets in the United States experienced major shifts in station network affiliation because of the Fox Network's agreement to buy 20 percent of New World Communication Group. New World had acquired American Communications Corporation and Argyle Television Holding. This move caused several stations who were affiliated with one of the "Big Three" networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) to become Fox Network affiliates (see Abelman et al, 1997, pp. 363-364). One of these stations is located in the Dallas-Fort Worth market, the eighth largest market in the United States, and one of the few to have had a VHF independent station. The shakeup in affiliations on July 1, 1995 resulted in KDFW-TV (Ch. 4), the former CBS affiliate, becoming a Fox Network affiliate; KTVT (Ch. 11), formerly an independent superstation becoming a CBS affiliate; and KDAF-TV (Ch. 33), which was the Fox affiliate, becoming an independent.

Perhaps the biggest effect of the changes was on the news operations of these stations. Fox continued local newscasts on KDFW-TV at 5 PM, 6 PM, and 10 PM, and added another hour of news from 9 to 10 PM. KTVT had a one hour-long nightly newscast from 9 to 10 PM before the change; it now schedules local news at 5, 6, and 10 PM. KDAF-TV had no newscasts, before or after the change.

These changes offered an opportunity to observe the effects of network, program, and channel loyalty. A somewhat similar change occurred in 1979 in Indianapolis, when the NBC and ABC affiliates switched places. This study found strong support for channel loyalty. "Repeat viewing of a channel's local and network newscast appears to be the rule, even if there is a change of network" (Wakshlag, et al, 1983, p. 66).

This study replicated some of this earlier research, and presents a unique opportunity to determine if channel loyalty would be as strong in one of the top ten markets as it was in the smaller Indianapolis market, especially in this somewhat different situation; also taking into consideration the changing marketplace situation for television viewing. Because KDFW-TV (Ch. 4) has had a strong news operation and the same news anchors for a number of years, and KTVT (Ch. 11) has had only local newscasts for a relatively few years in a different time period, this affiliation change had the potential to give a strong indication of channel loyalty in this major market.

Statement of the Problem

In most studies of the reasons why viewers turn in to any given television program, the effects of program loyalty, channel loyalty, and network loyalty may be

somewhat difficult to separate. Network affiliations changes offer a naturally occurring opportunity to observe these effects.

Questions to be answered included: (1) Will viewers remain loyal to the Channel 4 local newscasts? (2) Will viewers continue to watch the CBS Evening news when it switches to Channel 11, and, if so, will the 6 PM local newscast on Channel 11 gain these viewers? If the ratings for the Channel 4 local newscasts remain constant, strong support for the concept of channel loyalty will be indicated. But, if the ratings indicate a shift in viewers to the newscasts on Channel 11, support for network loyalty, as well as lead-in effect, may be indicated.

Previous studies have attempted to predict audience flow by examining audience duplication. A 1985 study (Webster) defined audience duplication as both the proportion of the total audience viewing any pair of programs, and the percentage of a program's total audience that also views another program. The findings suggested that inheritance effects were more of a matter of lead-in then lead-out. Support has been found for program type loyalty (Headen, Klompmaker, & Rust, 1979); and for network loyalty (Bruno, 1973). Boemer (1987) found significant correlations between lead-in show ratings and local television news ratings; Davis and Walker (1990) studied inheritance as share maintenance. While share maintenance effects between network prime time programs did decline from 1983 to 1985, there was a substantial increase from 1986 to 1988. Youn (1994) found that an increase in program choice options (in a multichannel situation) facilitates such choices based on program type preference.

Lin's 1996 survey of affiliate general managers examined factors that might influence ties between TV networks and their affiliate stations. Lin wrote that the

"impact of network news programs on affiliate loyalty, however, seems negligible. This is perhaps due to the fact that network news programs primarily provide a station with prestige and symbiotic reliance more than economic gains" (p. 210). Lin's premise highlights the fact that financial factors are at the forefront of the network-affiliate relationship (p. 206).

Abelman, Atkin, & Rand's study of 1997 investigated nine of 37 markets that had experienced affiliation shifts. Their underlying motive was "how do viewing motivations relate to viewing patterns and view perceptions, particularly during a period of unprecedented television affiliate realignment" (p.374)? Their study confirmed "the existence of ritualized/habitual viewers, but it ha[d] also been determined that these viewers are relatively indiscriminant consumers with regard to the source of programming" (p. 375).

Barrett's 1998 study examined the relationship between affiliation change and ratings changes for local and network television news. She found that the Nielsen ratings data from February 1994, 1995 and 1996 showed a negative relationship between an affiliation change and change in ratings for local news, but no relationship between affiliation change and change in ratings for network news (p.17). Barrett (p. 5) stated that Webster and Newton (1988) found a greater degree of correlation between network and local news ratings when the local news led into the network news, thus "the overall relationship between the network news and local news was determined more by the strength of the local news than vice versa" (p. 386).

Method

The difference in methods between the present study and the 1979 Indianapolis study lies first in the choice of respondents. The Nielsen VI/P for the Dallas-Fort Worth DMA indicates strong news viewing shares among working women and was noted for all three of the evening newscasts before the change. Thus, the selected population for this study was stratified as working women.

While the earlier study used viewing diaries, a random sample of listed telephone numbers yielded a sample of women who work outside the home. Telephone responses provided for immediate feedback and confirmation of availability for later questioning. Respondents were called in June 1995 before the affiliation change and asked about news viewing for the 5, 6, and 9-10:30 PM local newscasts, and the 5:30 PM network newscast. The same respondents were called again in October 1995 after the July 1 change and asked again about their news viewing for the week. Ratings were calculated for each of the newscasts based on the sample.

Findings

As provided in Table 1, the findings of study indicate statistically significant results. The findings were analyzed utilizing paired comparisons of the main effects by television station. (The central distribution limited theorem provides that the sampling distribution with large samples will be normally distributed. As an additional check, "bootstrap" confidence intervals were calculated by resampling with replacement from the original data set. This allows one to empirically construct for a sampling for the mean

differences. The p values and confidence intervals did not appreciably differ from the parametric tests.)

Table 1

t-Tests of Paired Samples

(NOTE: any p value less than .05 indicates "statistically" significant result)

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = **.022**
Ch.4, 5pm		
Pre	.3563	
Post	.1494	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .112
Ch.4, 5:30pm		
Pre	.2874	
Post	.1379	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = **.007**
Ch.4, 6pm		
Pre	.3276	
Post	.0862	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = **.005**
Ch.4, 9pm-10pm		
Pre	.5977	
Post	.2299	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .319
Ch.5, 5pm		
Pre	.4195	
Post	.3333	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .773
Ch.5, 5:30pm		
Pre	.3046	
Post	.3276	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .649
Ch.5, 6pm		
Pre	.3793	
Post	.3391	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .684
Ch.5, 9pm-10pm		
Pre	.5690	
Post	.5230	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = **.003**
Ch.8 ,5pm		
Pre	.9310	
Post	.5575	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = **.023**
Ch.8, 5:30pm		
Pre	.8563	
Post	.5632	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .077
Ch.8, 6pm		
Pre	.7989	
Post	.5862	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = **.027**
Ch.8, 9pm-10pm		
Pre	1.2759	
Post	.8793	

Variables	Mean	2-tail Sig = .244
Ch.11, 9pm-10pm		
Pre	.2241	
Post	.1437	

(Note that *Channel 11* became the CBS affiliate after the change, thus taking over the network newscast from *Channel 4* at 5:30pm.)

Findings indicate that viewership changes for Channel 4 (the former CBS affiliate, later Fox Network affiliate) were statistically significant at 5pm, 6pm, and 9pm, all showing decreases in viewing among the sample group (See Table 1). The other statistically significant station was Channel 8 (the ABC affiliate) at 5pm, 5:30pm, and 9pm, also showing a decline in viewership.

It is interesting to note that the overall "winner" occurring from the affiliate change was Channel 5 (the NBC affiliate) as show in the in-tab sample findings of the Nielsen ratings for the same period. These findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Nielsen In-Tab Samples

5-5:30pm	*Channel 4*	*Channel 5*	*Channel 8*	*Channel 11*
May 1995	27(.048)	26(.047)	62(.111)	19(.034)
October 1995	25(.052)	38(.079)	43(.089)	---

5:30-6pm	*Channel 4*	*Channel 5*	*Channel 8*	*Channel 11*
May 1995	34(.061)	28(.050)	67(.120)	13(.022)
October 1995	30(.062)	47(.979)	48(.100)	4(.008)

6-6:30pm	*Channel 4*	*Channel 5*	*Channel 8*	*Channel 11*
May 1995	39(.070)	33(.059)	82(.147)	21(.036)
October 1995	32(.067)	55(.115)	63(.131)	6(.015)

9-10:30pm	*Channel 4*	*Channel 5*	*Channel 8*	*Channel 11*
May 1995	71(.127)	105(.189)	141(.253)	27(.048)
October 1995	62(.129)	122(.254)	117(.244)	43(.089)

Note: In-tab sample for May 1995 was 557; In-tab sample for October 1995 was 480. DMA Ratings are for working women.

The Nielsen findings are somewhat consistent when compared with the pre- and post-viewing results for the sample group as provided in Table 3. While not all of the respondents were available for the post-survey, all pre- and post-survey results are

presented. Average persons viewing are for each newscast watched (the number of times) and each newscast finding is adjusted for the number of days each week the broadcasts were presented for the individual stations (5, 6 or 7 days).

Table 3

Viewing Results: Pre-/Post-

5-5:30pm *Pre: Yes Watched = 70* *No Watched=104* *TOTAL=174*
Post. Yes Watched = 52 *No Watched=78* *TOTAL=130*

	Channel 4			Channel 5			Channel 8			Channel 11		
	Count	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*
PRE	62	12.4	.071	73	14.6	.083	162	32.4	.186	---	---	---
POST	26	4.3	.03	58	11.6	.089	94	18.8	.145	4	.8	.006

5:30-6pm *Pre: Yes Watched = 66* *No Watched=108* *TOTAL=174*
Post: Yes Watched = 54 *No Watched=76* *TOTAL=130*

	Channel 4			Channel 5			Channel 8			Channel 11		
	Count	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*
PRE	50	8.3	.048	53	8.8	.05	149	24.8	.143	---	---	---
POST	24	4.8	.037	57	9.5	.073	95	19.0	.146	7	1.2	.009

6-6:30pm *Pre: Yes Watched =71* *No Watched=103* *TOTAL=174*
Post: Yes Watched = 51 *No Watched=79* *TOTAL=130*

	Channel 4			Channel 5			Channel 8			Channel 11		
	Count	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*
PRE	57	9.5	.055	66	11.0	.063	139	23.2	.133	---	---	---
POST	15	2.5	.019	59	9.8	.075	102	17.0	.1315	6	1.2	.009

9-10:30pm *Pre: Yes Watched =103* *No Watched=71* *TOTAL=174*
Post: Yes Watched = 87 *No Watched=43* *TOTAL=130*

	Channel 4			Channel 5			Channel 8			Channel 11		
	Count	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*	*Count*	*Av.Per*	*Rating*
PRE	104	14.9	.086	99	14.1	.081	222	31.7	.182	39	5.6	.032
POST	40	5.7	.043	91	13.0	.10	153	21.9	.168	25	3.6	.028

Notes:
1) Although all of the respondents were not available for the post-survey, all pre- and post-survey results are presented.
2) Av. Per is Average Persons viewing each newscast within the pre and post results.
3) Ratings are the percentage of the total respondents in the pre and post results.
4) Results for each newscast are adjusted for the number of days which broadcasts are presented each week for the individual stations (i.e., 5, 6, or 7 days).

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Conclusions

Overall, the findings of this study, along with the Nielsen ratings for the same period, show little support for channel loyalty, network loyalty, or program loyalty. This finding is similar to Barrett's 1998 study. In contrast, the channel loyalty factor was supported in Wakshlag's (1983) study and Boemer's (1987) study, which professed lead-in characteristics.

Because the CBS evening lost viewers in the sample study, there appeared to be little network loyalty. Even though Channel 4 (the former CBS affiliate, later Fox Network affiliate) continued with the same anchors, there was no indication of program loyalty or channel loyalty. By contrast, Channel 4's Nielsen numbers are nearly stable failing to reflect the decline as presented in the study's results. It might also be noted that, although Channel 11's non-news programs were not included in the study survey, an examination of the Nielsen In-Tab Samples showed a considerable loss in viewership, there again indicating little support for channel loyalty. Interestingly though, Nielsen results show an increase in the Channel 11 9:00pm-10:30pm time slow, while the survey results show a slight decrease (although statistically insignificant). Additionally, the Channel 4 local newscasts lost to Channel 8 (the ABC affiliate) and Channel 5 (the NBC affiliate), although the Nielsen ratings showed Channel 5 as the big winner, as previously noted.

Further review of the data presented can help to explore the on-going attributes of channel loyalty coupled with individual station gains at the expense of local market competitors. Of course, many of these factors are tied directly to the individual station's utilization and reliance upon network originated programming.

With the proliferation of cable channels and direct satellite distribution capabilities, loyalty aspects will continue to play a vital role in viewership habits, particularly in relation to locally originated programming (Henke, et. al, 1984). Given the importance of local and network newscasts and their relationship with local affiliate programming, and the overall economics involved (see Lin, 1996), factors regarding channel, network, and program loyalty (including lead-in effects) remain a topic for further research. Additionally, studies should be carried out to determine the role such loyalty attributes play in the sales and marketing aspects (White, 1977 & Darmon, 1976). Confirmation of this on-going research was epitomized when Barrett wrote earlier this year that "[t]elevision programmers and academic researchers have also believed that viewers are loyal to channels, to networks and to particular kinds of programs" (1999, p. 101).

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Radio-TV

Abstract

The 1996 presidential nomination contests: Network news coverage

This study examined whether television network newscasts during the nomination period of 1996 focused on strategy and horse-race schemata rather than explanations of how nomination contests differed from state to state. Specifically, lead-ins, introductions, segments, kickers, video sequences, and graphics were studied. Results showed that strategy messages were more frequent than explanatory information on contest differences both in words and pictures. The opportunity to use full-screen graphics was not utilized for learning.

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The 1996 presidential nomination contests: Network news coverage

Two democratic theories are relevant to evaluating nominating systems (Crotty, 1987). One favors a "plural elite" or an indirect representative approach, and the other theory favors a more direct "participant-oriented" method; America's nominating system is a combination (p. 63). The participatory model may be necessary to maintain the tie between the governed and the governors in a democratic society (Fiorina, 1981), yet the participatory-oriented model is difficult for voters because the rules of the state contests vary from state to state. The concentration of contests made the 1996 season even more difficult for voters. Although Republicans are discussing spreading out the contests in 2000 (Ayres, 1999; Cook, 1997), there is no guarantee that Democrats will do likewise or even that the Republicans will follow through with their plans. Lessons learned from the 1996 election may be vital to improved coverage for 2000. Studying television coverage of the nomination period is important because voters or potential voters get more information from television news than from newspapers (Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner, 1994).

The best word to describe the intensity of the 1996 nomination season is "front-loading" (Barnes, 1995). About 30 nominating contests were packed into early February to late March as opposed to the more traditional time frame of scattering nomination contests from February to June. By the end of March, the Republican nomination was almost decided because even with a third of the states still to hold their contests, seven of the 10 largest states had determined their votes with more than 75% of the Democratic

delegates and nearly 70% of the Republican delegates selected (Cook, April 29, 1995). State parties desire front-loading for two reasons: "to capture more attention from the candidates for regional or local issues" and to respond to voters who feel disenfranchised when the candidate has already been chosen by the time the voter gets to vote (Barnes, 1995, p. 1156). Also, as witnessed in the 1996 fight between Iowa and Louisiana to hold the first caucus, states were eager to capture media attention lavished upon those states holding the first contests. Party leaders know that in modern history, the nominations usually have been decided early with the exceptions of the 1976 Republican race between President Gerald R. Ford and Ronald Reagan lasting up to the national convention and the 1984 battle between Walter F. Mondale and Gary Hart continuing to the final week of the primary season (Cook, August 19, 1995).

However, front-loading has negative implications for voters for several reasons (Cook, January 22, 1994). Because campaigning is so fast-paced, candidates will spend too little time in primary/caucus states to engage the electorate. Front-loading also can trigger a domino effect and reduce the likelihood of meaningful participation for voters. Therefore, it was extremely important in 1996 for media to give explanatory information to citizens. Although national media could not tell people exact times of poll closings and how to register in each state, they could give information such as whether the primary is closed or open and who would be allowed to vote in each state's contests. Simply giving the number of delegates to be chosen or the importance of the state contests denies potential voters information about how they might vote.

The purpose of this study is to examine whether the main emphasis of television network newscasts during the nomination period was strategy and horse-race schemata or explanations of how nomination contests differed and how voters could participate.

History and background

The nomination system changes to fit the social and political needs of the country (Warnock, 1996). In 1901, Florida was the first state to pass a presidential primary law – a reaction against selection of candidates by big business interests. By 1916, 26 states relied on primaries. But the Depression and World War II cooled the idea because of candidate and party expense. Originally, primaries in the early 20th century were a solution to corrupt conventions, but primaries' potential was soon usurped by the political bosses (Crotty). After World War II, primaries and caucuses began to increase, and by 1976, 26 states held primaries (Warnock). In 1968, Hubert Humphrey lost the primaries but won the nomination with party bosses' aid and then lost the presidential bid. The Democratic Party then formed the McGovern-Fraser Commission, which initiated the inclusion of more young people, women, and minorities (Achen, 1989). This commission was followed by the Mikulski Commission of 1972-1976 that introduced proportional representation, that is dividing a state's national convention delegates based on the popular vote rather than winner take all (Crotty). After those reform movements, a second commission, the Winograd, attempted to bypass some of the grass-roots participation concessions by changing more primaries to caucuses and advocating the awarding of 10% of the delegation to the governors and state chairs and another 25% to politically-favored candidates (Crotty). By 1980, 37 states held primaries, and the length

of the primary season was almost twice as long as the general election campaign (Warnock). With Reagan's 1980 landslide, the Democrats decided to bring the system more into the control of party regulars with the Hunt Commission, which further decreased grass roots participation and increased party professionals' influence through "winner-take-all" primaries and delegate selection based more on party committees (Crotty). The Fairness Commission of 1984-1988, instigated by Jesse Jackson and Gary Hart's 1984 delegates, attempted to reverse some of the Winograd and Hunt commissions' innovations. These constantly changing rules in the delegate-choice process matter to potential voters because "they can be conducive to favoring certain candidacies or points of view. Some groups gain, others lose. We are all affected. The rules are anything but neutral" (Crotty, p. 85).

Not only are the rules not neutral, but also the rules are not uniform from state to state or party to party – unlike the final election. For example, Missouri Democrats returned to a caucus in 1992 after abandoning that method for primaries in 1988. Missouri continued its caucus system in 1996, and both parties held caucuses but on different dates. Some states even hold different kinds of events such as Michigan where Democrats held an open caucus in 1996 while the Republicans held an open primary. Other states go a step further on the complication scale: Arizona Democrats held an open caucus and Republicans held a closed primary in 1996 (Cook, August 19, 1995).

In addition to open and closed primaries and caucuses, there are other variances. In a presidential preference primary, voters choose the candidate they'd like nominated or they select delegates (Warnock, 1996). However, the preference votes cast by voters may not even be legally binding on the delegates. The caucus system is equally as complex with

many starting at a precinct caucus level, then a county, and finally a state convention, which finally chooses the national delegates. Caucus voters on the precinct level may not feel that their votes even count. Candidates often don't target the average voter in a caucus as they would in primaries (Warnock, 1996). Although Democrats began to make changes in the 60s for more involvement, their caucuses still are usually open to party members only. Only 14 states held caucuses in 1996.

Literature review

Improvement of general election coverage has been a constant theme for media critics and researchers. Critical analyses have focused on variations of news media's preoccupation with horse-race journalism and coverage of campaigns as game strategy (Steger, 1999; Patterson, 1994; Teixeira, 1992).

Nomination contests are researched less than the general election, probably because the varied structures of primaries and caucuses make them difficult for researchers to compare from state to state. The nomination system is a moving target for voters attempting to understand or participate in primaries or caucuses (Norrander, 1993, 1991). However, some inferences can be made about the special needs of caucus and primary voters over general election voters based on differences of nomination contests and general elections.

The importance of individual nomination contests vary more than general elections. Candidate viability fluctuates more than in the general election, and the importance of the general election is constant as opposed to the salience of nomination contests in determining who gets the nomination. For example, a candidate may "lose" in one state's

primary but a week later "win" in another. In a general election, however, there is only one winner (Flanigan & Zingale, 1991).

Voters in both caucuses and primaries have no control over extrinsic or elite-level activities, but those outside-the-voter factors may affect whether voters will make the decision to participate (Norrander, 1991; Norrander, 1986). Elite-level activities center around strategic campaign factors — evident in candidate strategies, media attention, and nomination contest rules. Complicated procedural rules that vary from state to state could directly influence turnout (Norrander & Smith, 1985).

Understanding media attention or coverage, then, is necessary in determining whether voters will feel encouraged to participate. The framing concept refers to how stories are presented through "subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems..." (Iyengar, 1991, p. 11). Framing consists of selection and salience (Entman, 1993). "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text ... to highlight some bits of information about an item ... elevating them in salience ... making more noticeable, meaningful or memorable to audiences" (Entman, p. 52). Entman concluded that omissions of definitions, evaluations, and recommendations are as critical in giving the audience clues as inclusions. According to Shah, Domke, and Wackman, framing "focuses on the manner in which the construction of communication texts influences individual cognitions by selectively focusing on particular parts of reality while ignoring or downplaying other aspects" (1996, p. 509+).

Based on the principle of *gestalt coding* of television, both print scripts and pictures should be examined when studying framing because in television news, pictures are as

important as the words when analyzing how people determine candidates' personalities (Graber, 1987). The gestalt coding method examines political context; anchor's lead-in and verbal and nonverbal editorializing; audiovisual message of words, nonverbal sounds and pictures; and interactive effects within stories and among other newscast stories. Strategy and horse-race schemata often are used by news reporters to focus on politics as a game rather than viewers' schemata of viewing politics as a means of choosing leaders and solving problems (Patterson, 1994). Several problems exist with the game schema of television news: viewers seldom see candidates for more than 20 seconds, and viewers are not receiving serious political debate about issues (Hallin, 1997). Often television news focuses on candidates rather than political parties (Chafee, Zhao, & Leshner), and learning of television content must occur quickly because newscasts are transitory and cannot be reread (Robinson & Levy, 1986).

Because television has become the principal medium of campaign communication and television news the most important vehicle used to discern issues differences between candidates (Chaffee, Zhao, & Leshner; Brians & Wattenberg, 1996), studying television coverage is important to understanding what information voters are receiving in the early stages of the campaign. Although issue-oriented voters use both newspaper and television to compare candidates' issue positions, those voters utilize television as their secondary medium when searching for candidates' personal qualities (Lowden, Andersen, Dozier, Lauzen, 1994). Television media exposure during the nomination contests is important for political learning in the general election. It is during this time period, when voters' attitudes are still changing, that voters form candidates' impressions starting with

relational perceptions of candidates and evolving to perceptions of candidate competence (Pfau, Diedrich, Larson, Van Winkle, 1993).

Method and research questions

We examined scripts from CBS, NBC, and ABC news. Only these three were studied because the three networks devote the same time to the evening newscasts and follow similar formats. ABC scripts were available on Nexis-Lexis©. Tapes were used from Vanderbilt Television News Archive for CBS and NBC. Those tapes were transcribed by two researchers. Print scripts were used for coding except for graphics and video sequences.

In addition to scripts, the CBS and NBC videos were examined to determine the video sequences and full-screen explanatory graphics seen by viewers. Graphics and video clips were coded only for CBS and NBC tapes because the ABC tapes were not available because of financial constraints.

The nomination period runs from February through May. For purposes of this study, broadcasts from Feb. 12, 1996, through March 12, 1996, were examined because this was the most concentrated four-week period of the primary/caucus season. Feb. 12 was the evening before the Iowa caucus, often considered the start of the nomination season. Super Tuesday was March 12.

Preliminary testing by the researcher and a second coder resulted in the final structure of the categories. Two student researchers completed the final coding. Intercoder reliability was 88%. The SAS package was used to perform all statistical analyses.

The unit of analysis was the news story for the evening news. Information coded for each story included: (1) lead-in – first two sentences, usually spoken by the anchor; (2) introduction, lead-in plus sentences before the first correspondent or segment was introduced; (3) segment one; (4) segment two; (5) kicker, last line by anchor; (6) first three video sequences; and (7) graphics.

Segments were determined by the researcher based on introduction of a new correspondent or subject, often after a commercial. Only the first two segments were coded, and CBS had third and fourth segments while ABC and NBC devoted much less time to the nomination coverage. Thus, for comparison purposes, only the first two segments were coded, and in some newscasts from ABC and NBC, there was no second segment.

The lead-in, introduction, and first two segments were coded for 10 themes of coverage: 1) tracking poll results of network or other poll results; 2) issue coverage or comparison of issues; 3) ad analysis of different candidates; 4) leadership qualifications or experience for the job; 5) strategy or horse-race coverage (which candidate is behind or ahead, importance of primary or caucus to that candidate, what candidates are doing to win, which strategies are working, which are not, campaign techniques, campaign promises to a group – what candidate was trying to do to gain favor with group, change in media strategy, trouble in the campaign – staff or issue causing problems, money problems, who might be running mate, withdrawal of candidate and what effect may have on others; 6) what voters are saying about the candidates – specific voters talking – or now it's the voters turn to make up their mind or decide; 7) political expert or journalist discussing strategy; 8) person used for humor, background, or color; 9) and discussion of

nominating process. Items included under discussion of nominating process were explanation of difference between primary and caucus, explanation of open and closed primaries and caucuses, explanation of voter eligibility, explanation of how many delegates out of total number being chosen in contest, explanation of "count" or how many delegates the candidate had, explanation of phrase "winner take all," and importance of contest.

The research questions were:

Research question 1: Because the lead-in and introduction set the tone of the newscast or how the newscast will be framed, what was the usual "theme" in the lead and introduction?

Research question 2: What is the theme of the first two segments of the newscasts?

Research question 3. What theme is the viewer left with by the kickers?

Research question 4: How did the picture sequences frame the nomination contests?

Research question 5: Would the full-screen explanatory graphics help learning in newscasts - explaining the complicated process of the nomination contests?

Results and discussion

We coded 79 stories. Rounded percentages or numbers are reported because the researchers used the entire population of stories; hence, statistical inference such as X^2 tests was not necessary.

Research question 1: Because the lead-in and introduction set the tone of the newscast or how the newscast will be framed, what will be the usual theme in the lead-in and introduction?

Of 29 stories for ABC, 52% of the lead-ins focused on strategy coverage with 45% focusing on nominating process, and 3.4% or 1 lead-in focused on what specific voters were saying about the candidates. Also, most of the introductions focused either on strategy coverage or discussion of nominating process (59% on strategy, 35% on discussion of nomination process). (Figure 1)

CBS's 26 stories had 85% or 22 lead-ins focusing on strategy and 12% or 9 lead-ins focusing on nominating process. CBS's introductions were 42% or 10 focused on strategy and 19% or 5 focused on nominating process.

Of NBC's 24 stories, 42% or 10 lead-ins focused on strategy with 15% or 12 lead-ins focusing on nominating process. NBC's introductions were 50% or 12 stories for strategy and 38% or 9 introductions on the nominating process.

Examining the introductions and how they covered the nominating process is more useful than just comparing lead-ins. When all three networks were totaled, 62% of the introductions used strategy as a theme with 30% using the nominating process. The percentages may be misleading, however, because the introductions that did focus on the nomination process often were mixed with strategy. Very few actually explained the system except to tell what a candidate's strategy was in winning the nomination, how many delegates were at stake, or how many delegates each candidate now possessed.

Several introductions had potential to inform voters. On Feb. 12, the lead-in of Peter Jennings on ABC said:

> Every four years we remind you that the word caucus, as in these meetings tonight, is a Native-American word. Algonquin, we think, that once meant meeting of the tribal elders. Today it means a genuinely democratic exercise in which lot of people can participate if they think it's important.

An ABC introduction on Feb. 27 included strategy, but it also explained how the votes would be awarded:

> Good evening. We begin tonight with Republicans. There are three presidential primaries today. And for the first time, this political season we hear from the Midwest and the Southwest. The two Dakotas and Arizona are having their voices heard today. Among the front runners, there's a very good chance that Senator Bob Dole will win a primary and there's also a pretty good chance that he will be embarrassed by Pat Buchanan or by Steve Forbes.
>
> In the primaries today, 75 delegates to the Republican convention will be awarded; 18 each in North and South Dakota. They will be awarded proportionately – get 50 percent of the vote, you get half the delegates. The largest prize is in Arizona – 39 Republican delegates there and winner takes all.

Other introductions from ABC, CBS, or NBC gave little explanation about the intricacies of the process.

Figure 1: Leads and introductions – numbers and percentages of stories in top two categories

		Strategy	Nominating process
ABC	Leads	5 or 52%	13 or 45%
	Introductions	17 or 59%	10 or 35%
CBS	Leads	22 or 85%	3 or 12%
	Introductions	20 or 77%	5 or 19%
NBC	Leads	10 or 42%	12 or 15%
	Introductions	12 or 50%	9 or 38%
Total for 3	**Leads**	**47 or 59%**	**28 or 35%**
	Introductions	**49 or 62%**	**24 or 30%**

Research question 2: What is the focus of the first two segments of the newscasts?

Research question 2: What is the focus of the first two segments of the newscasts?

Combining the two segments, seven of the 79 newscasts contained segments about the nomination process in either the first or second segment. All those stories were on ABC or NBC with CBS carrying no nomination process stories in its first two segments.

ABC's Feb. 14 story focused on what made caucuses different from primaries and explained that the caucus system requires more than just pulling a lever – it meant discussing issues and a willingness to give up an evening. The segment showed Democrats in the Iowa caucus having to move into groups or caucuses according to whom they supported, and it explained that this was different from the Republicans who voted by a secret written ballot. Although this newscast contained only one segment, it explained well not only the difference in caucuses and primaries but also between Democrat and Republican rules.

ABC"second story explaining the nominating process said that it was not a playoff tournament – that losing one state contest did not mean that candidate was finished. It also explained that the contests were regional and local, not national: "People cast their votes in their own communities." Then it explained how the delegates were counted:

> JEFF GREENFIELD: Three, winning means different things in different states. In five New England states on Tuesday, the winner gets all the delegates, even if he gets just one more vote than the other guy. Two days later, New York will hand out 93 delegates based on who carries each of the states' 31 congressional districts. Those winner-take-all states, by the way, create an intriguing possibility.
>
> MICHAEL BARONE: If you have a three-way or multi-candidate race, a candidate with winning a plurality of votes just slightly ahead of a couple of others can win a majority of convention delegates even though a majority of primary voters don't really want him.

> JEFF GREENFIELD: One last point to keep in mind – delegates from 17 states will be going to the San Diego convention this summer not legally bound to vote for anyone. If enough of them don't like what they've seen so far, they just might have enough clout to put some new name in nomination.

NBC's stories concentrated mostly on the strategy of winning the nomination without giving explanations of the system. For example, segment 2 on Feb. 21 started with a voiceover and a graph that showed which states would be voting when. The voiceover discussed the nomination schedule, and Tim Russert followed and commented on what strategy the candidates would have to use. The Feb. 24 story was a mixture of strategy and commentary on the nomination contests coming up – especially Arizona. Glen Ifill did explain that Arizona's 39 delegates would be winner take all. Ifill added: "The distaste for politics as usual here is real. Fifty-six% of those eligible are not even registered to vote."

The Feb. 28 NBC story explained how few people are engaged in the nomination process. Tom Brokow said:

> Tonight, a little perspective on all this. In the heat of the primary battles, how many Americans have actually voted so far? A total, a grand total of 802,310 votes have been cast in all the Republican contests. That means, fewer than 3 out of 100 Americans have actually had a say. And how are the candidates doing?
>
> (Full-screen graphic with total vote, number of votes, and percentage beside picture of each candidate) Bob Dole's got the most votes. Nearly 250 thousand even if he doesn't have the most delegates. That 31%. ...

The March 2 NBC story, second segment, focused on how many delegates would be chosen in Junior Tuesday. A full-screen map graphic outlined the 10 states as they were discussed, but mostly the discussion was about what the candidates hoped to do in those states rather than the intricacies of the nomination system.

These results show that explaining the nomination process is not a top priority. Viewers would find out how many delegates would be elected and which states would hold their contests on what days, but they would not be told whether the upcoming contests would be open to them or closed.

Figure 2a: Segment 1, top three topics

	Topic	No. of stories
ABC(27 segment 1)	Strategy	20 stories, 74%
	Issue coverage	3 stories, 11%
	Nominating process	2 stories, 7%
CBS(26 segment 1)	Strategy	23 stories, 89%
	Ad analysis	2 stories, 8%
	Political experts	1 story, 4%
NBC(24 segment 1)	Strategy	22 stories, 92%
	Nominating	1 story, 4%
	Issue coverage	1 story, 4%

Figure 2b: Segment 2, top three topics

	Topic	No. of stories
ABC(18 segment 2)	Strategy	7 stories, 39%
	Political expert	5 stories, 28%
	What voters said.	3 stories, 17%
CBS(20 segment 2)	Strategy	13 stories, 65%
	Political expert	5 stories, 25%
	What voters said & Issue coverage	1 story each, 4%
NBC(16 segment 2)	Strategy	8 stories, 50%
	Nominating	4 stories, 25%
	Political expert	3 stories, 13%

Research question 3: What theme is the viewer left with by the kickers?

The kicker is the last statement in the newscast, the one that completes the tone of the newscast. Up to the kicker, most of the stories focused on strategy. Focusing on strategy has been interpreted as a technique to retain objectivity. However, 50% of ABC's kickers were editorial or interpretative comments with CBS at 63% and NBC at 53%. Those kickers often appeared to give one final impression that politics is a game, and the viewer would not be able to get involved. Often the kickers could be classified as "zingers" or sarcastic comments about the process. Below are representative kickers coded as editorial or interpretive comments, based on the context of the previous segments:

ABC:

- There was just a little encouragement for the Republican establishment today. When Mr. Buchanan showed up at a rodeo in Tucson, Arizona today, some people hollered, "go, Pat, go"; others hollered, "Go home, Pat, go Home."

- Unlike the Republican contenders, President Clinton can do more than make campaign promises: Sometimes he can deliver.

- Buchanan admits that his language is, at time, indelicate, but he says that is part of his appeal. But the free-wheeling talk that is so effective on the campaign trial is not the voice of America that foreign leaders are used to hearing.

CBS:

- Alexander said: No, I'm going straight ahead, I'm coming up. Senator Dole has no fresh ideas, Buchanan has the wrong ideas, and I'll be coming straight up, I'll be the Republican nominee. Rather answered: We'll see, governor. Thank you.

- In this age of electronic politics, a simple idea that connects with voters is still what it's all about.

NBC:

- ... the golden rule, the first law of politics is that anything can happen – it is a long, long way, and the White House is dealing with a lot of issues that could blow up on them, and they know that.

●Dole said: I may not be a good talk show host, but I'm a good leader. Lisa Meyers answered: But will it be enough? And is it in time?

Figure 3: Top three themes of kickers

	Topic	No. of stories
ABC	Editorial or interpretative comment	12 stories, 50%
	Strategy	6 stories, 25%
	Other categories split	
CBS	Editorial or interpretative comment	17 stories, 63%
	Strategy	8 stories, 30%
	Other categories split	
NBC	Editorial or interpretative comment	14 stories, 53%
	Polls, person giving humor, anchor repeats name or tells to watch tonight	3 each, 12% each

Research question 4: How did the pictures frame the nomination contests?

Although a network newscast has many video shots, in this study only the first three sequences were coded. Campaigning shots that only lasted a few seconds or less were combined to form a sequence. Thus, sequence 1 might include a shot of a candidate shaking hands, later giving a speech, meeting with voters, etc. Sequence 2 might be a shot of the candidate being interviewed – if the interviewed lasted more than one question. Sequence 3 might be an interview with the candidate.

For both CBS and NBC (ABC was not coded, see Method section), about 50% of the first three picture sequences were campaign sequences – or strategy. The dominance of those strategy sequences were combined with a majority of segments covering strategy.

The strategy emphasis of the audio and visual combination reinforced earlier research that news focuses on strategy at the expense of other needed information.

Figure 4: First three sequences of video shots

	Picture topics	No. of sequences
CBS	Campaigning clips	38 or 56%
	Candidate interviews	11 or 16%
	Other prominent Repub.	7 or 10%
NBC	Campaigning clips	34 or 47%
	Voters	8 or 11%
	Candidates' ads	6 or 8%

Research question 5: Would the explanatory graphic elements help learning in newscasts or explain the complicated process of the nomination contests?

Graphics abound in television news – from logos such as "Campaign 96" and "Decision 96" to graphics explaining poll stories. Three kinds of graphics were used in the newscasts: full-screen graphics, graphic boxes with a reader, and almost-full screen. The graphics analyzed in this study were the full-screen graphics. Usually the almost-full-screen graphics were used to show ads from different candidates, and the graphic boxes with a reader were used for visual relief. Also, more so than in newspapers, graphics are combined with photos. For example, the stories focusing on ad watches or simply what candidates' ads were saying about each other showed the ads in almost-full-screen graphics of a TV set combined with campaign sequences.

CBS graphics

During the 29 coded days, CBS ran six graphics covered the nominating process. The first one ran Feb. 21, the day after the New Hampshire primary. A headline said "Upcoming Primaries and Caucuses," with two subheads saying "Delegates at stake: 417" and "Need to nominate: 996." The picture element was a map of the United States with states highlighted as the anchor mentioned the states. The voiceover said: "The next two weeks may be decisive – more than 1/3 delegates needed will be on the line."

A similar nominating process map graphic appeared on Feb. 27 on CBS with states colored with number of delegates at stake. The voiceover said: "In the Dakotas, north and south and Arizona, where it's winner take all...." However, there was no explanation of what winner take all or proportional voting meant. The remaining nominating graphics were similar to those on March 2 with an explanation that Junior Tuesday was coming up. The March 4 graphic showed the dates March 7, 9, and 12 and how many delegates would be chosen in those three days, and the March 5 one did mention that two states would also have caucuses. What is missing from these graphics is any further explanation of the primary system.

Other full-screen graphics were used at this time – three graphics showing who got what percentage of votes and the number of delegates. Another popular graphic was the one showing the results of a CBS poll, either the percentage of voters on issues in one state's primaries or comparing states. An example of that graphic was one on March 5 that polled Republican primary voters: "Buchanan Too Extreme – Colorado – 61%, New England – 58%, Georgia – 53%; followed by the results of Dole voters in Georgia: Most Important Quality – can beat Clinton, 30% and Washington experience 24%."

Six days showed a map of primary or caucuses and how many delegates needed to win or which contests were the next day or next week. No days had a graphic that explained the primary function in the nomination system. One day had a graphic explaining the difference in their views or showed views of just one candidate. Other graphics that appeared were five graphics that showed who got what percentage of delegates and 25 graphics that showed the results of CBS polls.

NBC graphics

NBC's graphics were similar. Nine graphics showed a primary map with how many delegates to win, and none explained the nomination system. Three showed differences in views, and three showed the percentage of delegates won by a candidate. Some differences from CBS in "other" surfaced. Although several also showed poll results, others shown were: a map showing in which states Republicans had gained Congressional seats since 1994, pictures of who endorsed whom, and the percentage of foreign-owned companies in South Carolina.

Figure 5: Types and number of graphics for CBS and NBC.

	CBS	NBC
Type of graphic		
Primary map, how many delegates at stake	6	9
Explanation of nomination system	0	0
Difference in views	1	3
Percentage of delegates, number of delegates	5	3
Poll results, other	25	9

Because television is transitory, full-screen graphics are needed to help viewers learn from the newscast. Graphics that explained the nomination season were few and lacked specificity. Most of the graphics explaining the nomination system focused on maps with number of delegates to be chosen in upcoming contests and which states would be choosing delegates. If a state had a caucus rather than a primary, that was noted, but no explanation was given about the difference. No graphics explained who could vote, whether the primary was open or closed, etc. A voter could determine that a contest was coming to his or her state, but the voter would have to seek all participatory information from local TV newscasts, newspapers, or parties.

Conclusions

The bottom line in American politics should be participation. Participation, however, can be difficult if not enough information is given to understand the process. This study concludes that lead-ins and introductions focused on strategy rather than explaining the process. Also, the first two segments and video sequences concentrated on strategy. Finally, full-screen graphics could be used to inform voters about the differences in contests, but the graphics were used more to explain polls than explain the differences in the contests. Repetition helps learning, but the repetition of the newscasts focused on repeating campaign shots and discussing "who was doing what to whom to win." National newscasts cannot focus on times of poll openings and how to register, but they could give information on the differences between open and closed primaries and explain more adequately the differences between caucuses and primaries. Then voters could find out from local parties or media how to register and where to vote.

Downs's theory applies economics to voting – voters are looking for ways to maximize benefits and minimize costs when seeking participation information (Downs, 1957). The results of this study show that voters would have difficulty in minimizing costs by watching network news. Voting at the nomination level may be necessary to stop cynicism and alienation that Gans cites for declining voter participation (Gans, 1995). If potential voters believe that there is no way they can get involved or catch the nomination train, they may be unhappy with the final two choices, thus adding to cynicism and alienation.

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Radio-TV

PRIME TIME NEWS
Effects Associated with the Rise of the Television News Magazine Format

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PRIME TIME NEWS
Effects Associated with the Rise of the Television News Magazine Format

In the past few years, the television news magazine format has become increasingly pervasive in prime time programming. Not only has there been an increase in the number of news magazine programs, but there has also been an increase in how frequently these shows are aired. This has changed the face of prime time programming, but how has the increase effected news and its content, the viewers and their attitudes?

The purpose of this paper is to examine the increased pervasiveness of the television news magazine and the effects associated with such an increase. It will first provide a brief overview of the development of the news magazine format. It will go on to investigate the increase of news magazine programming with regard to ratings, production benefits, and other programming factors. This paper will address the impact of the news magazine format on prime time programming. It will evaluate the influence of the format on traditional, network news and tabloid journalism programs. It will also explore the potential consequences of these changes with regard to audiences. Finally, this paper will conclude with a critique of news magazine programming and suggest a new course for the future.

The development of the news magazine format

In 1968, when '60 Minutes' broadcast its first show, producer Don Hewitt was characterized as an industry 'pioneer.' '60 Minutes' was based on the idea that news correspondents, not cameras, should cover events (Madsen 1984). In 1970, the Federal Communication Commission ruled that the top broadcast markets would be required to relinquish a half hour of prime time programming each weekday, and an entire hour each Sunday, in order to increase the variety of available television programming. Stations were required to individually program these new 'access' periods. However, because sponsors refused to support locally produced programming, an exception was made for stations to program documentaries, children's specials and public affairs shows (produced for national audiences) on Sundays (Fishman and Cavender 1998). This is where '60 Minutes' eventually found its niche (Madsen 1984).

'60 Minutes' defined the news magazine genre as three in-depth, narrative segments. However, the more traditional documentary producers of the 1960s and 1970s contested running three stories each hour, claiming that documentaries needed to be an hour in length. Surprise, 'ambush' interviews were considered outrageous. (Carter 1998) '60 Minutes' was highly criticized; nevertheless, it has endured as one of the top-rated, longest-running programs in television history (Madsen 1984).

In 1978, ABC hired entertainment producer Bob Shanks to create '20/20.' It was meant to be a new show, based on general interest print magazines such as *Life* and *Look*, not a clone of '60 Minutes.' (Madsen 1984) To distinguish '20/20', prime time production techniques (sophisticated lighting, for example) were incorporated with the show's live and on location coverage. However, before the end of its first season, '20/20' began to look like '60 Minutes' with standard, magazine-style, taped segments including interviews, investigative stories and human interest features

(Diamond 1991). The formulation was so strongly held that stories were covered on the basis of how well they fit within the genre. A segment producer for '60 Minutes' admitted, "We don't do the broad issues at '60 Minutes'; we do stories from which issues can emerge" (Ettema et al 1991, p. 82). She clearly elaborated that story selection had to do "with the practical concerns of the investigative journalism genre" (Ettema et al 1991, p. 82).

Now producers like Neal Shapiro (Dateline NBC) are attempting to redefine the genre, incorporating more viewer-friendly touches by increasing feature reporting and including regular programming elements (i.e., the 'Dateline Timeline' and 'Picture of the Week'). News magazines are beginning to provide extensive, blanket coverage of events and breaking stories. (Carter 1998)

The news magazine format has tended to be characterized by its in-depth, investigative approach to journalism. News magazines such as 'PrimeTime Live' and '20/20' (in contrast with entertainment magazines like 'Access Hollywood' and 'Extra') are produced by the network news divisions, and therefore have traditionally been associated with network news more than entertainment programming. Throughout the remainder of this paper I hope to challenge the practicality of this tacit association.

The impact of the news magazine on prime time programming

Originally, news magazines were developed as defense mechanisms, used to fill problematic programming slots. Now, news magazines are a network's 'secret weapon.' They alleviate programming pressures, fill problem slots and generate respectable ratings in the process (McClellan 1992; Stroud 1998). They are "an important embodiment of how a network is perceived by viewers ... these programs come into the home for 10 or 20 years, unlike a hit sitcom which comes and goes. So ... there are powerful reasons for programming [a proliferation of news magazines] in prime time" (McClellan 1998, p. 48).

Shapiro remembers a time when the production of even two news magazines (per week) was a daunting thought. With regard to the prospect of Dateline's expansion, he recalls a friend's (from ABC's 'PrimeTime Live') warning: "This will never work. You can't do two shows as well as one. You'll never find enough people. There's no way to find enough stories to be on twice a week. You'll crash and burn" (Carter 1998). Ironically, these words were spoken less than five years ago. This season (1998-1999), NBC revised its program schedule to air 'Dateline' five nights a week, introducing the concept of 'stripping' to prime time. Traditionally, 'stripping' (which refers to scheduling a television show five or more times a week) has been reserved for game shows and local station programming, outside of the prime time hours (Turner and Hosenball 1998). But news magazines are beginning to change that tradition.

Don Hewitt commented that 'Dateline' reminded him of the Dole pineapple family and their missionary trip to Hawaii, "they went to do good, and they did well; 'Dateline' is doing very well for itself," (Carter 1998). Hewitt has not been shy in asserting his opinion that the current craze and enthusiasm over news magazines is not about high journalistic ideals. But despite Hewitt's worry that a second edition of '60 Minutes' would run the risk of being another "'Dateline' with the name '60 Minutes' on it," (Carter 1998) '60 Minutes II' was unveiled this spring (Turner and Hosenball 1998; Consoli 1998; Weintraub 1998), in addition to CBS's three showings of '48 Hours.'

Similarly, ABC has merged 'PrimeTime Live' with '20/20,' which began the season airing three shows a week and added a fourth show following the end of the football season. In short, news magazines are giving prime time television a face lift. With the advent of another '20/20' and '60 Minutes II,' 28 of the prime time programming slots are devoted to news magazines (Weintraub 1998; Mifflin 1999).

As if 28 programming slots were not enough, the current pervasiveness of news magazines does not stop there. In the summer of 1998, David Westin, president of ABC News, revealed his hope expand '20/20' to run seven nights a week (McClellan 1998). NBC has also admitted considering similar programming changes. Even more startling is the recent concession that Dan Rather (CBS news anchor and managing editor of CBS's nightly news) made, validating the plausibility of traditional, nightly news becoming a half hour lead into the more popular news magazines on one or more networks (Brill 1998).

At some point the news magazine market will become over-saturated. However, the continuous proliferation of news magazine programming shows no sign of easing in the near future. Don Ohlmeyer, head of NBC's entertainment division, stated, "There is no show more important to us than 'Dateline.' I look on 'Dateline' as a hit show the same way I look on 'E.R.' as a hit show" (Carter 1998). As long as the networks estimate that the net profits of their news magazines outweigh the risks associated with new entertainment programming, news magazines will continue to increase in pervasiveness. It is safe to conclude that news magazines have transformed prime time programming.

Why has the news magazine become so pervasive?

Economics is the primary motivation behind the increased pervasiveness of news magazine programming. First, they are significantly less expensive to produce (as much as 50% less) than entertainment comedies and dramas, which can run more than $1.2 million per episode (Coe 1994; Stroud 1998; Miller 1998). Secondly, the networks own the news magazines. This is where the true value of the shows lies. Ownership frees the networks from being subjected to high license fees and the threat of popular shows being sold to other networks (McClellan 1994; Miller 1998). Although, news magazines generally have not been able to generate revenues in syndication, news departments now repurpose their stories, or segments of their stories in other news programming, and especially on cable networks like CNBC and MSNBC (McClellan 1994; Miller 1998). It appears that this trend will continue as networks expand and develop additional outlets, such as online magazines. There is also an increasing demand for news magazine programming in the international markets (McClellan 1994).

News magazines represent less risk for the networks. A number of failed news magazine programs can still be a less expensive investment than just one failed comedy or drama (Turner and Hosenball 1998). In addition, news magazines are cheaper to promote. Many network news programs refer to and promote one another. For example, segments of the 'Today' show highlight stories that will air on 'Dateline,' and Peter Jennings promotes upcoming episodes of '20/20' at the end of his nightly news broadcast.

Strip programming also makes it easier to promote news magazines. Each broadcast night that a news magazine airs generally targets a demographically diverse audience, such as 'Dateline

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ABSTRACT

The Raising Quality and Achievement Program is a 3-year initiative to support further education (FE) colleges in the United Kingdom in their drive to improve students' achievement and the quality of provision. The program offers the following: (1) quality information and advice; (2) onsite support for individual colleges; (3) help with benchmarking; (4) college-based development programs; (5) leadership assistance for governors, principals, and team leaders; and (6) regional practitioner networks and quality forums to develop and promote good practice. During the project, the objectives of raising student achievement have been re-evaluated and the policy assumptions underpinning discussions of student achievement have been identified. Data on the retention and achievement rates at all FE colleges in the United Kingdom have been collected, and their reliability has been assessed. The assessment revealed that achievements are being underreported for several reasons, including the incapacity of many FE colleges' management information systems (MIS) and the low priority given by some teachers to recording achievement data in MIS. The question of how high to aim when striving to improve student achievement was explored, and examples of successful application of the following strategies in various types of FE institutions and programs were identified: classroom-level interactions; learning pathway; and college policy and leadership. (Contains 13 references.) (MN)

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FEDA Further Education Development Agency

Aiming at achievement

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this publication is to provide an interim report on FEDA's research into improving student achievement. It provides answers to some difficult questions:

- What do we mean by achievement in further education?
- Where have we got to?
- Can we rely on the data?
- How high do we need to aim?
- What is emerging from research into effective practice?
- How does FEDA's work fit into this agenda?

This report is part of FEDA's *Raising quality and achievement* programme. This is a three-year initiative, funded by the DfEE, to support colleges in their drive to improve students' achievement and the quality of provision. The programme offers:

- **Quality information and advice service.** An information, advice and support helpline, underpinned by a database of good practice.
- **Quality improvement team.** On-site support for individual colleges in developing and implementing their plans to raise standards.
- **Benchmarking and information.** Help for college managers to benchmark their activities, improve processes and make better use of data.
- **Development projects.** One hundred college-based projects to increase the range of improvement strategies and share case studies.
- **Leadership and governance.** Help for governors, principals and team leaders to use their leadership skills to raise standards.
- **Best practice.** Regional practitioner networks and quality forums to develop and promote good practice.

The programme is run in collaboration with the Association of Colleges (AoC) and operates in close liasion with the FEFC's Quality Improvement Unit. For further details please contact: Anna Reisenberger, Manager, *Raising quality and achievement* programme. Tel: 0207 840 5323 Fax: 0207 840 5401 e-mail: areisenb@feda.ac.uk

2. What do we mean by achievement in further education?

Student achievement has risen to the top of the political agenda for further education. Rightly, it is seen partly as an end in itself. Numerous commentators have pointed out the relatively large percentage of 16 year-olds who leave full-time education with few or no qualifications. Others have deplored the poor performance of 'UK plc' in terms of the qualifications and skills of its workforce, particularly at level 3 and at HNC/HND level.

Raising achievement is thus seen as a good thing in itself: more skilled and better qualified citizens and supply-side support to develop a high added-value, knowledge-driven, internationally competitive economy.

Raising levels of achievement can also be seen as the means to a number of different ends:

- reducing social exclusion by ensuring that all young people have a stake in the labour market
- providing a second chance for people who failed to achieve at school
- promoting adult success in formal education and hence greater confidence in and commitment to lifelong learning and development
- reducing the cost of failure in post-compulsory education provision
- improving quality and driving up standards
- securing the best possible return on investment in post-compulsory education and training.

The following policy assumptions underpin these discussions of student achievement:

- achievement is associated with gaining qualifications
- qualifications are seen as the primary goal of programmes of study
- qualification-bearing programmes are seen as the most desirable form of publicly supported education
- measures of institutional performance are equated largely with completion and achievement rates.

These new policy assumptions have eclipsed (or at least suspended) several longstanding educational debates. The polarities of training *versus* education, vocational *versus* liberal education, community *versus* institutionally focused provision, academic *versus* applied skills have largely been displaced by a new, overwhelming priority: more and higher qualifications. For many part-time students, however, greater clarity around policy objectives gives rise to greater uncertainty around the monitoring of policy implementation and around measures of institutional performance. These issues are pursued in Section 3.

This new (and narrower) focus on qualifications has intensified arguments around a different set of issues. These are set out in Table 1 below.

Within a system that equates achievement with qualifications, these debates will become even more significant. They will, therefore, inform any assessment of progress to date and, by extension, the outline of future work.

Table 1. Summary of arguments around qualifications

Issue	Polarity	Argument
Educational and social deprivation: principles	College (or school) *vs* 'home'	The nub of this debate is the relative importance of social/family factors in student achievement. Discussion in the FE sector is muted compared with schools where there is a substantial argument around school targets, standards and inspections. Critics of OFSTED inspections have remarked that 'failing' schools are disproportionately located in deprived, inner-city areas.
Educational and social deprivation: measures	Postcodes *vs* some other indicator of educational and social deprivation	The discussion mirrors that in the school sector around entitlement to free school meals as a proxy for disadvantage. Proponents concede the importance of educational and social deprivation. The argument is between those who favour postcodes and those who favour previous attainment as an index of disadvantage.
Widening participation	Participation *vs* standards	This debate was explored but not resolved in the Dearing report on post-16 qualifications. Essentially, advocates of wider access and participation have a different emphasis from those who want to raise standards and increase rigour. In practice, the argument revolves around modes and principles of assessment, especially for learners who have not been successful at school and who view tests and exams with considerable misgiving.
Examination league tables	Raw *vs* value-added scores	By stripping out differences between college cohorts, value-added analysis should facilitate 'like-with-like' comparisons. Critics of value-added approaches argue that parents and other stakeholders neither understand nor want such information.
Measuring achievement	The possibility *vs* the impossibility of measuring year-on-year improvements in achievement	The main post-16 argument revolves around whether standards are being maintained, have improved or indeed have declined, as the number of qualifications achieved and the levels of achievement have increased. There is a further discussion in the schools sector between OFSTED and QCA about the practicalities of measuring improvement and achievement.

3. Student achievement: where have we got to?

Any discussion on student achievement is inextricably bound up with issues of information and data capture.

We currently have three years of detailed information in England from the individualised student record (ISR) and less detailed information in Scotland and Wales.

The ISR seems to indicate a particular achievement problem. Achievement rates are relatively low. This is surprising in that what is being measured is pass rates among those students who complete their programmes. Withdrawn and transferred students have already been removed from the calculation. The most recent figures for England are set out below in Table 2 and show that average achievement rates for long qualifications at levels 1–3 vary between 58% and 76%. In all cases, achievement rates are lower than the corresponding average retention rates for long qualifications at the same level.

The second major problem is that there is a much greater variation across colleges in achievement rates than in retention rates. The following data are taken from FEFC (1998a). Retention rates shown are from the first census date to completion as opposed to 'in-year continuation rates'.

The 75th percentile indicates the retention or achievement rate which the top quarter of colleges meet or surpass. What emerges from this data is that there is a much greater range of college performance around achievement than around retention.

The small gap between 75th percentile and the average for retention indicates that the performance of the top 25% of colleges is relatively close to the average. For all three levels, however, and across both age ranges, the gap between the average and the performance of the top 25% of colleges is significantly greater in respect of achievement.

The same point can be demonstrated graphically in Figures 1 and 2 on page 4. It is evident that:

- there is a much greater range of achievement rates than retention rates
- it is not just a handful of atypical colleges that give rise to the greater range of achievement rates
- rather, most colleges are distributed evenly across the wide range of achievement rates.

Table 2. 1996/97 benchmarking data: retention and achievement rates: all colleges

Source: FEFC, 1998a

		16–18-year-olds		19-year-olds and older	
		Retention rates (%)	Achievement rates (%)	Retention rates (%)	Achievement rates (%)
Level 1 long qualifications	average	81	59	80	58
	75th percentile	88	88	92	83
Level 2 long qualifications	average	77	63	77	61
	75th percentile	85	84	86	85
Level 3 long qualifications	average	78	76	78	59
	75th percentile	86	86	86	82

Figure 1. Full-time student in-year retention rate 1996/97

Source: FEFC, 1998b

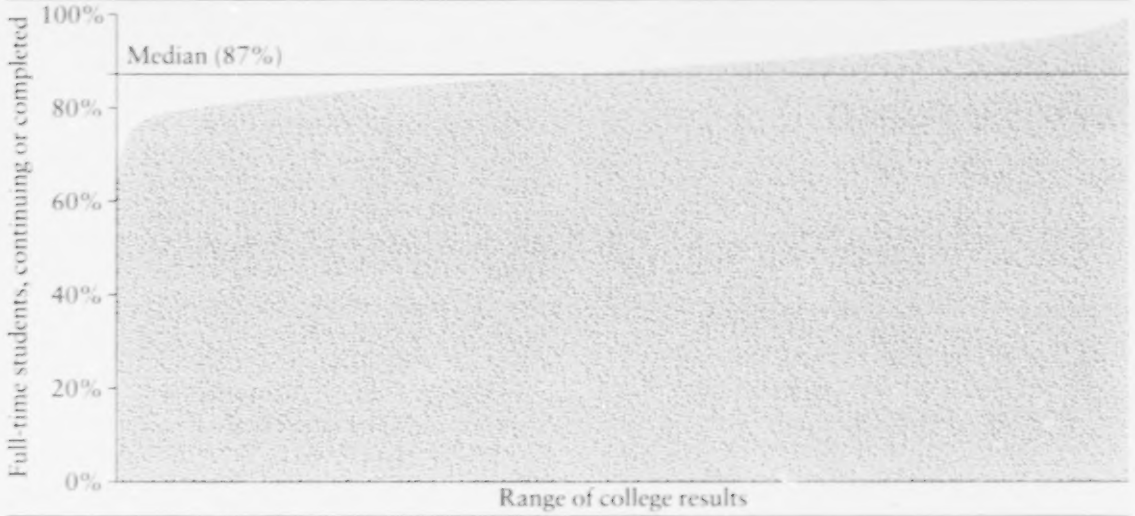
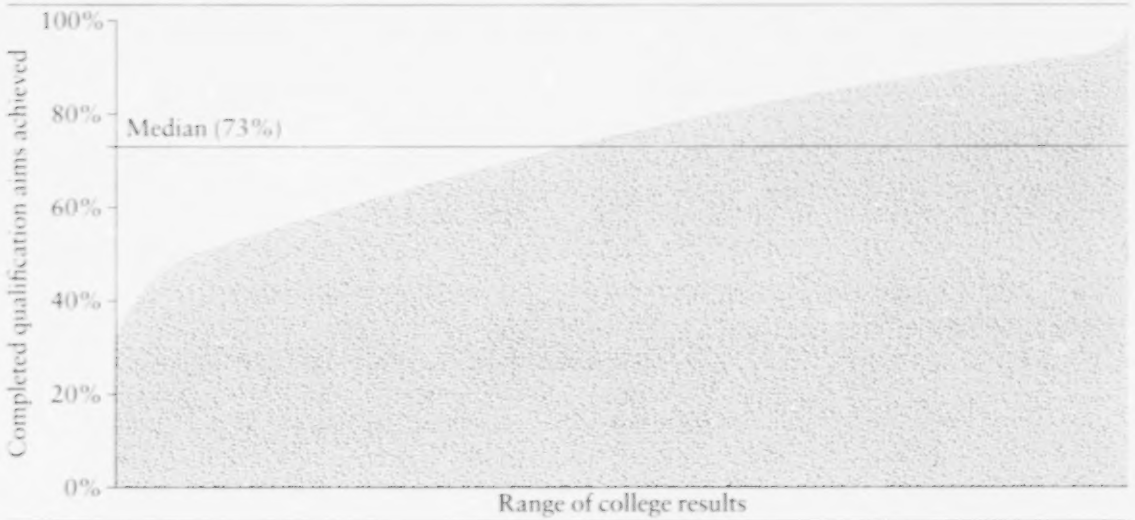


Figure 2. Achievement rates: long qualifications 1996/97

Source: FEFC, 1998b



4. Can we rely on the data?

A note of caution must be sounded at this point on the accuracy of ISR data. It has improved over time (for example, 1996/97 data is more reliable than 1994/95), but there is a lot of apocryphal and anecdotal evidence to suggest that it is still 'dirty'. The issue of data reliability can be illustrated quickly by reference to published statistics. As we saw in the previous section, the relationship between achievement and social disadvantage is an important issue. If we examine the 41 FE colleges with the largest proportion of their students recruited from areas of high disadvantage, we can explore the relationship between social and educational disadvantage and other performance indicators.

The problem is that the FEFC has officially expressed doubts about the most current achievement data for nine of these colleges ('under-estimated' or 'not agreed'). In a further 14 colleges, the variation in the percentage of qualification aims achieved from the previous year (1995/96) is more than 20% (plus or minus) (FEFC, 1998b) – a degree of change that is not credible. This means that 23 of 41 colleges in this group (56%) have achievement data of doubtful validity.

It is widely believed, moreover, that achievements are under-reported for three main reasons:

- the incapacity of many college management information systems (MIS) to cope with student achievement data from roll-on, roll-off programmes
- related difficulties in some MIS in recording achievement where this is delayed to the beginning of a new academic year
- a lack of priority assigned to recording achievement data on MIS by some teachers.

Even if data are accurate, there are further difficulties of interpretation and analysis. Four examples demonstrate this point.

Example 1

All ISR achievement data relates to the achievement (or otherwise) of qualification aims but the funding methodology rewards the multiplication of qualification aims for each student. Colleges A and B may have the same achievement rates. In College A, most students may be pursuing one main qualification aim and a high proportion may be failing to achieve this. In College B, by contrast, most students may be enrolled for two or more qualification aims. One of these will be, in their eyes, their main goal. All the students at College B achieve this main qualification aim. College B nevertheless has the same achievement rate as College A because of the volume of subsidiary qualification aims that are not being achieved. How should one interpret the data in this example? From a funding perspective, College B is performing at the same level as College A. From the perspective of students, however, College B may be seen as much more successful.

Example 2

In sixth-form colleges C and D, two identical groups of students are taught the same range of A-levels (with one exception) equally well and yet average total point scores for students in College C are higher than those in College D. The difference is that students at College C take General Studies A-level and those at College D do not. There is a difference between the two colleges but it should not be inferred that key teaching and learning processes in College D are any worse than those at College C.

Example 3

In our third example, College F has higher achievement rates than College E, and both colleges have the same (high) Kennedy weighting. Is College F out-performing College E? The simple answer is: we do not know. Even assuming that the curriculum offer and qualification strategies are sufficiently similar to enable like-for-like comparisons at least three competing interpretations are possible:

- College F is outperforming College E; there is a strong relationship between postcodes and outcomes and College F is more successful in helping disadvantaged students achieve qualifications.
- College F is more successful than College E but this has nothing to do with postcodes, either because there is no relationship between postcodes and student outcomes, or because there is no effect on achievement rates (as distinct from retention rates).

- College E is either as successful or more successful than College F, because there is a very strong relationship between disadvantage and achievement but the postcode measure of disadvantage is too crude to capture the greater degree of disadvantage among the College E students.

Example 4

Finally, Colleges G and H have similar proportions of part-time enrolments but dissimilar curricula. In College G, programmes are geared to people in work who want to advance their careers through qualifications. For a substantial proportion of students in College H, however, accreditation has a low priority. Colleges G and H may have the same achievement rates but, arguably, College G may be performing less well than College H.

This brief discussion is not intended to cause despair. Nor is it a counsel of unobtainable perfection. It does suggest, however, that inferences must be treated with caution. It also suggests an urgent need for some good empirical research that could clarify the issues of data revealed in Examples 1 and 3 and test the assumptions contained in Examples 3 and 4.

5. Raising achievement: how high do we need to aim?

There are two different and complementary ways of answering this question. One is a largely pragmatic approach to securing incremental improvements by reference to national benchmarks, relevant comparator information from inside or outside the college and levels of achievement in previous years.

All of this is logical, sensible and practicable. It underpins much of the work undertaken by FEDA and, for that matter, the strategies developed by funding and inspection agencies to:

- place retention and achievement at the heart of funding methodologies
- create inspection criteria, inspect against those criteria and publish inspection reports, partly predicated on student achievements
- emphasise achievement and retention within the criteria for awarding accredited status
- collect and publish benchmark data
- require colleges to set improvement targets.

However, although this approach is useful for securing incremental improvements and levering up averages, it does not help to answer the fundamental questions:

- How high should we be aiming?
- Where should we be focusing our efforts?

To resolve these questions we need some sort of model to represent student achievement. As the forthcoming FEDA report *Improving college effectiveness* (Somekh *et al.*, 1999) makes clear, we do not have a ready-made and widely accepted model of why and how students achieve in post-compulsory education. Instead we have a plethora of models, some of which have a larger evidence base than others.

Such models underpin all the current stimulating discussions that continue in further education concerning credit frameworks, maintenance of standards, information and communications technology (ICT), flexible curricula and resource-based learning,

qualification pathways, key, core, basic and transferable skills, modularity, the role of advice and guidance, vocational relevance, competency-based qualifications, principles of assessment and feedback, etc. All those concerned in debating and implementing these developments are making implicit or explicit references to models of student achievement. Although many of these models may be congruent or complementary, others are not.

In the schools sector, not just in the UK but also internationally, there is a much larger research base and a more developed consensus around models of student achievement and, hence, school effectiveness and improvement. This is a current and complex discussion, but at the risk of over-simplification, the factors that contribute to achievement at school are, in descending order of importance:

- student characteristics
- classroom-level interactions
- school-level policy and leadership
- national and local frameworks and policies.

Student characteristics include home environment, education and occupations of parents, student ability, etc. In many studies this can account for as much as 75% of the factors affecting achievement.

Classroom-level interactions include the design and delivery of teaching and learning sessions, schemes of work, specification of learning outcomes, grouping procedures and teacher behaviours.

School-level policy and leadership include factors that provide the conditions for teaching and learning: rules and agreements about teaching, timetabling, homework, approaches to quality, influence on school culture and ethos, arrangements to manage and supervise teaching.

Finally, at local and national level, policies on the school year, teacher training, funding formulae, etc., all ultimately affect student achievement. In terms of relative importance, however, after student characteristics, the next two most important factors are classroom-level interactions and school-level policies and leadership. This is represented diagrammatically in Figure 3 overleaf.

This is a highly condensed summary of a complicated argument. For further reading, the most accessible text is probably *Improving college effectiveness* (*op. cit.*). The fullest account of the research on which this model is based, is contained in Creemers (1994). There are suggestions for further reading in the reference section.

The question that immediately arises is: can this model be transferred to the college sector? In one critical respect, the schools sector, both in the UK and elsewhere, differs from the FE sector. There is a major and often unspoken assumption underpinning all such models in the schools sector that relates to how achievement is being measured. In the schools sector, student achievement is calculated at any one time by reference to a single measure of achievement (KS1, KS2, KS3, A*–C GCSE scores etc.).

The unique feature of further education, however, and what distinguishes it from schools (and for that matter higher education), is that it uses multiple measures of achievement. Thus, at many colleges, there are students enrolled on qualification programmes at entry, foundation, intermediate, advanced, higher national and indeed degree and post-graduate level.

This implies that student characteristics will be less significant in colleges than in schools in respect of student achievement. For as long as students are placed on appropriate programmes and those programmes are designed and delivered effectively, they should succeed.

There is a reverse argument. It might be argued that the FE student population is more challenging and demanding than the school population. It is hugely varied and changing; most students are adults and for them formal education may be a secondary activity. This may be true and could have the effect of increasing again the relative influence of the student characteristics factor. On the other hand, FE students (unlike school pupils) do not have to be in college. A distinguishing feature of further education is that students choose to study. They are thus a more self-selecting group than the whole-age cohort involved in school-level study. This would have the effect of reducing or diminishing the significance of student characteristics. The inference here is that, although we cannot yet say by how much, student characteristics may well be a less important factor in student achievement in further education than in the school sector.

A second difference between schools and colleges is that, arguably, college-level functions (structure, curriculum offer and model, leadership, culture, etc.) are more complex and managers have more discretion than in schools. This would imply the greater importance of this factor in colleges than in schools.

A third difference is that, in the main, there are few intermediate fuctions between the classroom level and the school level. The student experience of school is fundamentally determined in the classroom. In colleges, by contrast, there is a multitude of mediating processes (e.g. marketing and recruitment, advice and guidance, initial assessment, learning support, resource-based learning, student support, tutoring etc.). As these are processes that stand between college-level policy and leadership and classroom-level interactions, a tentative title for them might be 'learning pathway'.

The final difference between the FE and school sectors is this: by the same token that student characteristics may be less important, classroom interactions are likely to be more important.

This argument is represented diagrammatically in Figure 3. The relative importance of the factors affecting student achievement in schools is shown in the left-hand column. There is substantial empirical evidence to support this model. The factors affecting student achievement in colleges are shown in the right-hand column. The demarcation lines between college factors are marked as dotted lines because the model is tentative and at this stage hypothetical, to be validated or disproved by further research and analysis.

There is at least one major objection to the argument that we should be setting high targets for achievement. It is that the argument is based on the implicit assumption that all college students, especially adult part-time students, want to achieve qualifications. There is substantial anecdotal evidence to indicate that many adults drop out of programmes altogether to avoid tests or exams or absent themselves from assessment activities.

Figure 3. The relative importance of factors affecting student achievement

In schools	In colleges
Single measure of achievement	Multiple measures of achievement
National level	National level
School level	College level
Classroom interaction	Learning pathway
Student characteristics	Classroom interaction
	Student characteristics

This objection has considerable force but can be met in one of two ways. The criteria for eligibility for public funding could be tightened further to exclude courses that are not primarily focused on achieving qualifications. This option would run counter to the other policy objectives of widening participation and lifelong learning and is therefore unlikely.

A second response would involve some empirical work to verify the existence and identify the characteristics of such a group of adult learners to:

- develop some more appropriate assessment and accreditation methods
- create alternative measures of achievement
- remove the group altogether from calculations of achievement rates.

Several implications flow from this discussion.

1. We should be aiming high: if students are placed, supported and taught appropriately, most of them should be able to succeed.
2. The factors that colleges can control or influence and that affect student achievement most directly are: classroom-level interactions, management of the learning pathway and college-level policy and leadership.
3. These factors will need to be in alignment to maximise achievement.
4. Efforts devoted to improving the quality of classroom interactions and of mechanisms to manage the learning pathway will have the greatest influence on raising achievement.
5. Actions at the level of college policy and leadership that will have the greatest influence on student achievement will be those that create conditions for effective teaching and learning and for management of learning pathways.
6. Further education may be able to learn from empirical research in the schools sector about classroom interactions (pedagogy) and college-level processes (leadership etc.).
7. Schools may be able to learn something from colleges about managing the learning pathway.

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6. What is emerging from research into effective practice?

A brief overview of the messages emerging from research is that:

- Colleges and adult education services are placing much greater emphasis and managerial priority on efforts to improve achievement and retention.
- Strategies to improve retention are generally more widespread and better developed than strategies to improve achievement.
- Strategies to improve retention usually combine a cross-college dimension with specific actions in programme areas. Achievement strategies, by contrast, tend to be more piecemeal and more confined to individual curriculum areas and sometimes to individual programmes or courses.
- Some sixth-form colleges provide a notable exception to these observations: they have strategies to raise achievement both across the college and in individual subject areas.
- These sixth-form colleges may be exceptions because they are relatively small, have robust and well-developed, value-added methodologies for A-levels, a relatively settled A-level curriculum and focus on academic achievement as a key element of their competitive strategy.

Table 3. Raising achievement: examples of successful practice

Type of college	Strategies		
	Classroom-level interactions	Learning pathway	College policy and leadership
FE college: Faculty of Humanities	• Evening language students: development of OCN accreditation and a resource-based learning centre. • National Diploma Media Studies: review of staffing, programme structure, timetabling and assessment practice and development of open-access IT. • A-levels: tailored initial assessments; diagnostic phase in the first six weeks; improved tutoring and attendance monitoring; introduction of modular syllabuses.	• A-levels: raising entry requirements; group and subject interviewing; increased parental and careers service involvement; early identification of at-risk students; twice-yearly report sent to parents; new strategies to address learning support needs of students.	• Media Studies: £50k investment in accommodation and equipment but only after improvement process had begun. • A levels: A-level Humanities provision centralised in a single faculty from four departments.
FE college: adult part-time courses	• All courses have targets for enrolment, retention and (for Schedule 2 courses) pass rates; support before exams, including revision sessions increased; 'cause for concern' courses are subject to quality procedures including register checks, student questionnaires, tutor observations, analysis of prior advice and guidance and on-course support.	• Pre-enrolment advice and guidance improved; interviews introduced for many courses; more emphasis on individual support.	• Insistence on having rock-solid data through close monitoring of register completion; 2% of salary bill devoted to training and development of predominantly part-time staff; emphasis on continuous improvement through quality procedures, Investors in People and Chartermark.

continued overleaf

Table 3 continued

Type of college	Strategies: Classroom-level interactions	Strategies: Learning pathway	Strategies: College policy and leadership
Sixth-form college: A-levels and Intermediate GNVQs	• Abandonment of full-time GCSE resits in favour of Intermediate GNVQs. • GNVQ programmes restructured to six-week blocks followed by seventh catch-up week. • A-levels: introduction of modular A-levels. • A-levels and GNVQs: changes to induction and immediate follow-up of first absence.	• A-levels: intensive use of value-added for formative purposes and change of tutoring model; enhanced use of taster and pre-enrolment programmes; extra support for students whose home language is not English.	• Revamp of management information systems and introduction of electronic registration; use of value-added analysis for curriculum management; introduction of classroom observation.
FE college: Foundation GNVQs	• Creation of a single programme based around key skills; strengthened initial assessment; increased curriculum hours for courses and introduction of structured residential experiences; development of team approach to teaching with a full timetable and no gaps; better balance of theory and practice; multiple accreditation opportunities linked to regular celebration of achievement.	• Introduction of learning coordinators on a ratio of 1:30 to monitor attendance, tutor, assist with assignments, find work placements etc.; provision of specialist learning support for literacy, numeracy and dyslexia.	• Foundation programmes moved from five different curriculum areas into a single programme; provision of additional support resources.
FE college: GNVQ Leisure and Tourism	• Better team working and improved course organisation; changed sequencing of course work and work placements; creation of three pathways with different career orientations and appropriate new additional units; clarification of course tutor role.	• Introduction of more rigorous selection procedures; enhanced absence monitoring and follow-up and improved exit procedures.	• Raising awareness of reasons for withdrawal and failure; greater focus on achievement and retention at faculty board and college management team meetings.

- There are many examples of successful practice from all programme areas and levels of programme, types of college and, indeed, parts of the UK.
- Examples of successful practice in managing the learning pathway are perhaps less widespread than improvements in classroom interactions, and, to a lesser degree, in college policy and leadership.
- This appears to be caused by continuing difficulties in specifying relevant indicators, and hence standards and targets (so that even if guidance services are particularly effective, it is difficult to measure their influence).
- Successful strategies appear to be congruent with the model of student achievement sketched in the previous section.

The outcomes of FEDA's project on raising achievement will be written up in more detail but to give a flavour of the work, examples of successful practice in five colleges that have raised levels of achievement in targeted areas are set out in Table 3 on pages 9 and 10.

Three features of the case studies are especially striking. Firstly, the different initiatives seem to fit readily into the student achievement model sketched in the previous section. Secondly, the strategies are operating at different levels: at institutional, faculty, programme and course level respectively. Thirdly, despite the differences in focus and content, all the strategies have complementary elements at classroom, learning pathway and college levels. This does not prove or validate the model sketched in the previous section, but it offers some persuasive evidence that the model may be of some use.

7. How does FEDA's work fit into this agenda?

Improving college effectiveness

On FEDA's behalf, the University of Huddersfield has surveyed the views of principals and summarised work in the different traditions of school effectiveness, school improvement and college research. This will be published as *Improving college effectiveness* (Somekh *et al.*, 1999).

Raising achievement

In a recent study, over 50 colleges and adult education services shared their experience of successful strategies for raising achievement and retention at a series of conferences and expert seminars. A report is being compiled and will be available in late 1999.

Spotlight on learning

A third major initiative which focuses on effective practice within subject disciplines is *Spotlight on learning*. This research is based on the experience of practitioners and follows extensive consultations within the sector. Publications contain a wealth of learning and teaching materials and are designed to provide support for classroom-level interactions. Two manuals (*Psychology and sociology* and *English and communications*) have already been published. Work is continuing on materials to support:

- Agriculture
- Basic skills
- Childcare
- Construction crafts
- Dance studies
- ESOL
- Fashion and textiles
- Finance and accounting
- Hairdressing
- Maths
- Mechanical, general and aeronautical engineering
- Music
- Science
- Sport and recreational activity

Raising quality and achievement

The *Raising quality and achievement* programme, sponsored by the DfEE, will be a key focus of FEDA's work in the short term. Planned jointly by FEDA and AoC to complement measures taken by inspection and funding agencies to raise standards, this contains six strands of practical activity, and a research strand. The practical activities include:

- Best-practice networks aimed at curriculum leaders and cross-college managers. Their objective is to provide a supportive framework to share effective practice in improving retention and achievement.
- Development projects: over a three-year period, FEDA will sponsor a large number of projects to improve quality and raise achievement. Models, tools and materials arising from these projects will be widely disseminated.
- Leadership for achievement to develop college leaders through a mixture of action learning, college twinning and accredited training.
- An advisory centre operated by AoC to provide a confidential information, advice and referral service by telephone and e-mail.
- A quality improvement team to provide help to colleges where it is most needed, mainly through consultancy.
- Benchmarking: this service will design and pilot benchmarking tools and support the development of effective practice in the sector.

Research

FEDA is undertaking an extensive research programme with regular reports to the sector, which will incorporate findings from the new initiatives.

The programme is driven by the need to provide some robust solutions to the pressing problems identified in this report. The problems and planned research activities are listed (in no particular order) in Table 4 below.

Self-assessment

FEDA's most recent publication on self-assessment is *Self-assessment in practice* (FEDA, 1998). This is a multimedia pack which includes guidance and staff development activities on how to self-assess for further improvement, and a video on classroom observation. It is based on a number of development projects. More recently (FEDA, 1999) FEDA has published *Measuring performance – improving quality* and *More and better for less*, which explore more specific aspects of improvements. All are relevant to the improvement of achievement.

Quality forums

FEDA runs termly Quality forums in Taunton, Coventry, London, Crewe and Leeds and a Quality network for Wales. Over 300 colleges belong, and forum meetings discuss and share good practice in self-assessment and improvement.

Table 4. Issues around achievement

Achievement problems	Planned research activity
What are the relationships between deprivation and achievement and between widening participation and raising standards?	Differential achievement: to investigate the relationships between outcomes for different groups of relatively disadvantaged students and college practice
How can value-added methods be applied to vocational qualifications.	Value added in GNVQ and GNVQ precursors: to explore the relationships between qualifications at start of programme and student outcomes and develop robust value-added methodologies for formative and summative purposes
Measures of quality: how should we measure the effectiveness of the learning pathway or college-level policy and leadership in raising student achievement?	These issues will be explored pragmatically within the various strands of the *Raising quality and achievement* project
What is the relationship between classroom-level interactions and student achievement in further education?	This is the most central and most difficult of all questions. It is being addressed specifically in the best practice networks and development projects and in the *Spotlight on learning* work mentioned on page 11.

Further information

FEDA and AoC are keeping all colleges informed about the raising achievement project through a series of mailings and reports.

The FEDA publications mentioned in this report are available from: FEDA publications, Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London, SE11 5EH. Tel: 0207 840 5402/4 Fax: 020 7840 5401 e-mail: publications@feda.ac.uk

Correspondence about this report is welcome. Please contact: Paul Martinez, FEDA East Midlands Region Office, Robins Wood House, Robins Wood Road, Nottingham NG8 3NH. e-mail: pmartine@feda.ac.uk

FEDA maintains two separate mailing lists for value-added and retention and achievement. Please send your details to Paul Martinez to be included on either or both lists.

References and further reading

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What do we mean by achievement in further education? Where have we got to? Can we rely on the data? How high should we aim? What is emerging from research into effective practice? How does FEDA's work fit in? Aiming at achievement is a brief interim report on FEDA's research into improving student achievement, especially within a framework that equates achievement with qualifications. It includes examples of successful practice.

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